Walking Trips in Norway

N. TJERNAGEL

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WALKING TRIPS IN NORWAY

BY

N. TJERNAGEL

Columbus, Ohio
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To Barbru, Kari and Marit

who gave me welcome, and
whose kindnesses
so vividly reminded me of
the ways of the dearest
of departed beings,

Mother

upon whose early footsteps
I came, and lingered.

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Nearing Norway.

CHAPTER I

In the heart of Norway

MY first question after arriving at Fagernes, Valdres, the terminal of a funny little railway over which two trains come puffing daily across the mountains from Christiania, was asked of the proprietress of Fagerlund hotel as to the whereabouts of the ancestral place I was seeking. "Follinglo? Why, that is only half an hour's walk up the road from here." When she suggested that it was rather too late that day to make the visit, I failed to appreciate the advice. How preposterous to imagine that one could delay such a quest for as much as one second!

I flung my satchels to the attendant and started out eagerly on foot, brimful of expectations. I scanned every nook and cliff and boulder, as I pressed on, hailing them as friends, knowing full well that grandfather had often lingered among them, a joyous youth, in the long, long ago. When I came to the venerable looking Strand church, I decided that he had been baptized there. Here I collided with a picturesque figure in the person of the native-born schoolmaster, Mr. John Strand, who wore old fashioned knee-breeches and trim vest, and

who told me to look where he pointed, which I did — and beheld Follinglo nestling ever so snugly on the other side of the fjord.

Precipitous hills, picturesquely clad with spruce and fir, overhung the narrow stretch of soil grudgingly spared between sea and mountain for the tiny Follinglo fields. Though reminiscent of straitened lives and circumstances, the scene gave inspiration, possessing as it did, many attributes of peculiar loveliness and charm.

Though there is no gaudiness whatever about the little farm, the inviting surroundings make up for it in varied attractiveness. The lovely, narrow fjord with its mirror-like surface and miles of picturesque length, together with the towering peaks of the snow clad Jotunheim mountains seen in the distance, forms a view fairly unsurpassed in grandeur. The sorry looking house and barn-yard add no prestige.

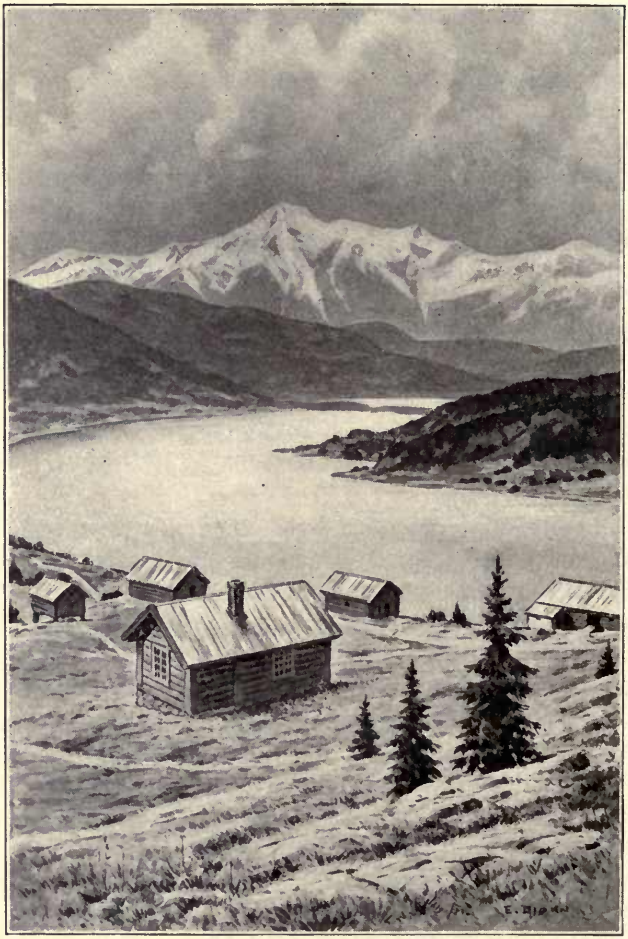
No wonder grandfather felt rather hemmed in, for, being a strong, active youth, the work did not suit; also, having attained to a goodly height, he could scarcely stand upright in the little house; and every time he passed in and out he was obliged to bend low, as the doors were barely five feet high. There was ancient moss between the logs, placed there, nobody knows how many decades ago, to keep the wind out. The huge old fireplace served to introduce air and dissipate the heat. No wonder it was so difficult for the germs of consumption to thrive midst such uncongenial surroundings, in those airy, jolly log huts of old. Because of the many illy ventilated houses nowadays, here and elsewhere, this particular germ has developed into quite a pet, rewarding his caretakers with lingering tortures and almost certain death.

The house had birch bark on its roof for shingles, with turf laid thereon to hold them down. The grass grows as green as you please up there; and also little trees that can find a footing nowhere else. The rascally goats sometimes hop upon the roof, peer into the chimney or perch thereon, scratching and tearing about generally, to the best of their ability. To hinder such pranks, old boards or planks are often placed over the sod as a protection.

From the door of the hut I had a glorious view of the white robed peaks in the distant Jotunheim. I felt their beckoning call, as had grandfather, when they drew him on, opening up endless vistas of beauty and grandeur before his entranced vision. I determined to follow in his footsteps. The friends of his youth were no more, the old hut being the only survivor, and I had no cause to linger.

With eyes and mind fixed upon the Jotunheim, it was not without something of an effort, that I forced myself to deviate from the road and clamber up a frightfully difficult mountain path to pay a visit to an ancient lady who lived hidden away up there, all by herself, not far from the clouds; and who, I had been told, might have a store of interesting recollections of bygone days. It was an arduous climb, and the region was so lonely that it suddenly occurred to me I might be waylaid by vagabonds. But a moment later I burst out laughing at the idea that a tramp, in full possession of his faculties and freedom, should take the trouble to climb so rugged a mountainside as this.

Wandering on, I finally made out something which I decided was either a hut, another queer-looking pile of stones, or a grotesquely shaped boulder. Whatever it



Drawing by E. Biorn.

Follinglo.

was, it struck me as being a freak arrangement anyhow, marring the face of nature. When I finally reached it, I knocked at the likeliest place on the dilapidated wall, having the semblance of a door, and awaited results with some trepidation. I heartily wished I had never been allowed to read about hags and ogres. My knock had a disturbing effect, for soon something stirred. Now it was coming! It clamped heavily along on the floor and I thus made out that the occupant, of whatever form or features, walked in wooden shoes. This reassured me. Ten times rather that than a padded, stealthy tread. The latch clicked—my heart stood still—the door creaked ajar, and before me stood, peering out, a grayhaired old woman of a very masculine front, but with a reassuring beam in her bright, alert eyes.

After the usual greetings, she invited me in, saying: "Be welcome. I am here alone, but the Lord bides with me." She grew immediately curious, and asked if I might perhaps be the "Lensmand" (sheriff), or some such official. I quickly assured her that I did not have that honor, being merely a plain American citizen, searching high and low for beauty spots, interesting people, relatives, and such like; adding also that I was the son of a certain Martha Karine, daughter of an emigrated son of this section, Nils Anderson Follinglo. She gazed long and intently at me, finally exclaiming: "You do not mean to say that our Nils Anderson went to America, had a daughter and a grandson, and that you are he, and have come all the way from America to tell me so!" I could not deny it. "Yes," she continued, "I knew Nils very well. There is no relationship, but we were brought up together as children, my mother being his step-mother."

The dead had come back to life. I had buried my grandfather's friends all too soon. She was eighty years old and as chipper as possible, there being about her, as yet, not the faintest suggestion of being dead. She was concerned about my comfort after the tiresome, difficult climb, and immediately began bustling about to prepare me a cup of warm coffee and other good things. Every now and then she would pause to contemplate the strange, new figure before her and say, as if to herself: "How wonderful! To think a grandchild of Nils, with whom I used to play, oh, so long ago! should come to visit me. What does it all mean? The good Lord knows."

She invited me to the table with the utmost heartiness of manner, as if she would willingly have placed before me all that she possessed. She had fetched some coarse black bread and a piece of cheese from a horrible looking hole under the house; and I am sure I do not know how clean it was, but I would have eaten it if it had been old leather. Who would willingly hurt her kind old heart? She gave a finishing touch to my cup, inside and out, wiping it with her old, gnarled fingers, so as to be sure that it would be nice and clean. She stooped with much labor to wash the dishes in an old iron pot, containing cold water, placed conveniently on the floor. The wiping cloth was not dirty, but of an indescribable pattern. The coffee was as black as night, she having no cream to offer — the cow was kept during summer at a distant "saeter" (mountain summer pasture) — and strong as such a brew could possibly be concocted. Although knowing it to be as poison, I tasted of it as if sipping nectar. She insisted on pouring me another cup and still another, but I managed to as-

sume the defensive, being used to it, having been fairly deluged with coffee by well-meaning Norwegians the whole summer.

After our repast, she asked me to lean back in my chair and make myself comfortable. Meantime she lighted her pipe and, between long-drawn, valiant puffs, told her story. To me it was a tale of great interest — interesting as a romance, but too lengthy to be re-told. Can I ever forget her as she sat there with her venerable, kindly face beaming upon me, the smoke from her pipe forming a halo about her head and, thanks to the draft from the open "peis" (fireplace) behind her, never becoming quite so thick that I couldn't see her? She thought it remarkable that I understood her speech, and could hardly grasp the fact that I was really foreign born, and yet able to speak her language.

She told me she had had a hard up hill pull all her life, yet she knew of people who had fared worse. She had never been else than a poor, hard-working tenant, and for the last twenty years the invalidism of her husband had added weight to her burden; but, thanks be to God, who had given her a strong back, she had been able to hustle, dig and scrape, with sufficient energy to support them both. The greatest sorrow she had known was when they carried him away to the church-yard, leaving her utterly alone, with only herself to provide for. Her constant outdoor life had made her well proportioned, muscular and strong. In spite of isolation and little schooling she was remarkably well posted on state and community affairs. Her thorough acquaintance with the Bible gave to her discourse a charm and depth the equal of which one might seek far to find.

She exhibited, with childish delight, letters from

her little American granddaughters. She found a vast deal of pleasure in looking over these missives, though she could not read them. The childish scrawl appeared to her an exhibition of unusual talent; each crude twist and turn, blot or dot, bearing evidence of remarkable intelligence and skill. During my reading of them she poured forth a running accompaniment of audible comments, her face expressive of much wonder at my proficiency in voicing in living, spoken language, those beloved, uncertain, ink tracings.

Drawing by E. Biorn.
Marit.

When she was to have her picture taken, she made a partial change of her habiliments right before me, having so much to talk about that she could not spare the time to go into another room to do it.

Just before my departure, she asked me to read a chapter to her from the Bible. She reverently laid away the old pipe beside her spectacles, folded her hands, and listened with close attention. The tobacco smoke lingered lovingly about her rapt features while I read, and though it looked odd, it struck me as being no more out of place than when preachers or others envelop themselves in similar clouds, enjoyed virtuously

and contentedly, promptly at the close of services. She had her smoke just before the exercises, they immediately after.

My advent had awakened many memories, and she declared that her mind acted as if she were in a trance. She averred, again and again, that it was the most unheard-of thing that a grandson of Nils should come to seek her out this way, after all these years. Her feelings being thus aroused, the parting was cruel. I heard afterward that the lonely old soul had not slept a wink the night following.

As I descended to the road on my way to the hills, I turned about and saw the most beautiful rainbow imaginable hovering over old Marit's hut. In another moment the afternoon sun came peeping out, flinging its sparkling rays against her window, and though I could not make out the hut, the panes gleamed forth as living balls of fire, sending shafts of gold penetrating far into the valley and all about. Thus did Marit's mountain home pass from my sight.

CHAPTER II

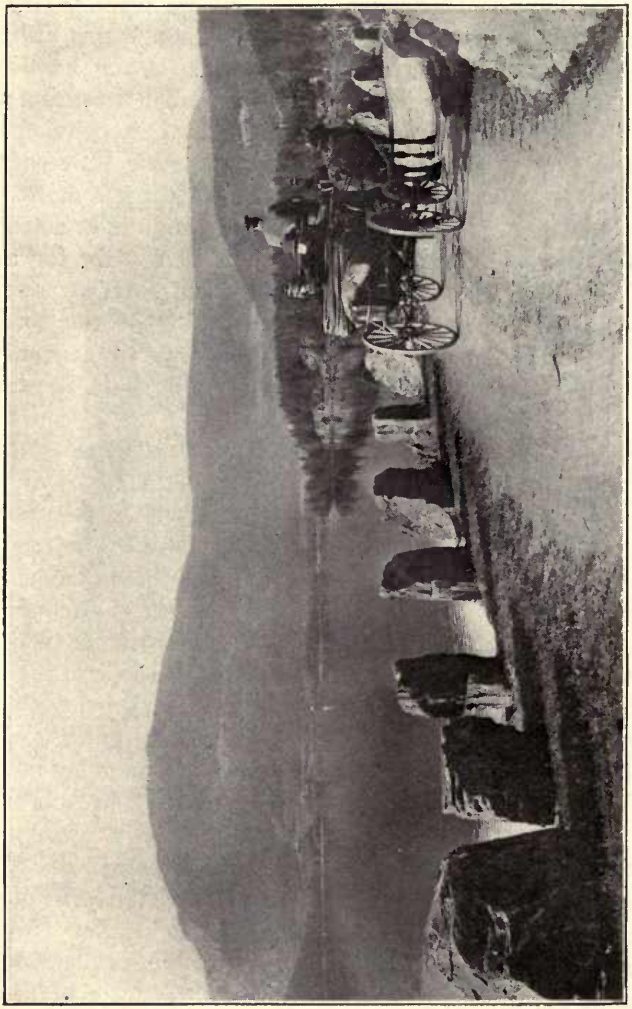
Roadside Rambles

THE next morning found me climbing the lesser heights of Aurdal, for I was determined, while passing this way, to get a glimpse of the mountain hotel at Fosheim "saeter," and the surrounding scenery as well. It has become all the rage for the city-dwellers to flee to these saeter hotels during high summer, to bask in jolly friendships, "rømmekolle," and the bracing mountain air. The pretty little saeter cows turned loose above the clouds, in valleys between the snow-drifts, find a sufficient supply of the rare, succulent grasses to satisfy their wants and fill their milk-bags, these in turn being greedily drained by the mountain idlers. To say one is hungry up here is but a meaningless phrase, but to say that one feels very much like a famished Russian wolf better describes the situation; this being the normal or if you will, the abnormal state of the appetite. The potatoes were as snow-flakes, and the vension quite too tempting. "Rømmekolle" is pure angel's food, being curdled milk with raised cream, powdered on top with ground toast and sugar.

I was in great luck, for I unearthed a distant relative in the person of the manager of the hotel, and at dinner I was given gratis the seat of honor among one hundred and fifty guests. I felt truly distinguished. A famous kappelmeister from Copenhagen and an aristocratic-looking professor from the University of Christiania were placed one on either side of me, and, al-

though desperately hungry, I felt it due them to try to appear in such splendid presence as though this little matter of eating was quite immaterial. I am afraid some of our near neighbors suffered a similar constraint; but the professor meanwhile remained blissfully oblivious of the effect of his imposing presence, seeing little and caring not a straw what the others did. It was a matter of speculation, how that hungry crowd would have acted if the unwritten law had not held us tied. Oh, for a chance to lift that soup bowl bodily and to enjoy one moment of entire freedom! But nothing of the sort happened, for, strangely enough, the laws of conventionality, which we may break if we will, hold firmer than those of the state.

After dinner we were tumbled unceremoniously out upon the spacious veranda for coffee. As I sat sipping the gossip-inspiring beverage, I gazed with much admiration on the scene far below. The beautiful Strand fjord lay sunning, glossy and placid in its chosen haunts, with not a ripple upon its surface. Pretty Follinglo lay peeping out from its corner far in the distance, with hundreds of other small farms lying prettily scattered about, on either shore of the narrow fjord skirting the parallel stretch of green-crested hills. Little patches of irregular fields gave variety to the scene, reminding one of nothing so much as a huge crazy quilt. The nearby water-falls kept up their eternal din; though pleasing to the view, they vex the ear and harrow the nerves. It cannot but be somewhat of a trial to those living in the near neighborhood to endure this everlasting din. My eyes, always hitherto fed by the broad western prairie prospect, feasted joyously on the new food set before them in the form of these valleys and fjords, the saeters,



Strand Fjord, Valdres.

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

the distant mountain-tops with their perpetual white coverings — which, by the way, reminds me that I must be getting on, for I am to climb them.

On the steps, going out, I was confronted by a Norwegian engineer who lives in Berlin and who, seeing I was an American, volunteered the information that he had just visited America, but had found it dull. "There is noise enough, and power enough, the same, for instance, as in that water-fall over there, but I missed life. Your people are not living, they are just enduring. Our people live on much smaller incomes, and yet get more pleasure and satisfaction out of existence than yours do." I asked him where he had been staying. "Pittsburg," said he. "Well, next time you call, spend a few weeks on the Mississippi, view the farms and villages in the great middle West, get into the very heart of America, and then climb up here and tell me your story."

After giving my testimony, I hurried along behind two Danish tourists who were taking a short cut down the mountain side, back to the main road. There is nothing more joyously thrilling than this exploring of new regions if there is only some one at hand to bear the blame in case of trouble. My fair guides were genuine talkers and no mistake. What a peculiar utterance! Their jerky enunciation of their provincial dialect soundly oddly to one not accustomed to their speech. The Danes love to visit Norway, as do also the Germans, many coming even in winter. English tourists are met with in great numbers, and Americans are frequently seen.

The next morning found me on the main avenue, bound for the snow-capped mountains. I determined that nothing should turn me from the road again; that

I would follow as direct a course as possible up the crooked valley to the very highest point. I found myself walking in the company of some boys and girls hailing from different points, viz., Christiania and Bergen. They were pupils and teachers out for recreation, and a jolly lot they proved to be. We had a glorious tramp that day.

The smooth, even roads of Norway make it a pedestrian's paradise. The splendid highways, running through lovely scenery, attract numerous pleasure-seekers of various kinds, of whom a great many are dependent on their own legs for locomotion. It may be incredible that an American, unused to much walking, should have covered three hundred and fifty miles of rugged mountain roads and by-paths in one season; but such is the fact.

We turned around at least five hundred times that day, walking semi-circularly along the road. The panorama was constantly shifting, both before and behind. Thus, certain scenes, with a seemingly set expression, would assume an entirely different aspect when we reached them, or viewed them from an opposite direction. Sometimes the road hung precariously on stony ledges looking straight down several hundred feet; at other times it went in serpentine windings, without any seeming aim or direction, but we did not care; we just kept strolling on, following it. There are over 20,000 miles of these floor-like, happy-go-lucky roads in Norway, and their total cost I was told amounts to scarcely $23,000,000.

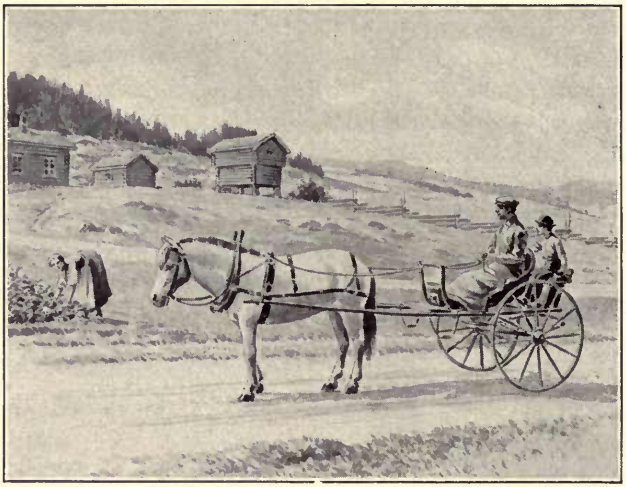
We talked to all the people we met, and they had no objection, for time is not money here. The moment they set eyes on the American, there always ensued a dead stop, for I must needs tell my story, and answer

eager questions about relatives and friends in all corners of forty-eight states.

We enjoyed viewing the mowers, as they attacked the timothy and clover fields with their scythes, bending their bodies at a very correct angle each time they took a stroke. They picked up the hay with their hands, and hung it upon rails or strings, one above another, to dry. In the harvest field (oats and barley) the whole family helped, from the aged grandmother down to the future grandfather, now a mere toddler who got in the way and made himself a nuisance, but appeared fully as much ocupied as any of them. We saw many young girls in the grainfields, bending low, scythe in hand, to cut the grain. From their stooping postures they looked at us sidewise as we passed. It was decided that it was hard to withstand anything like that, especially when it had royal red cheeks, curling lips, blue eyes, and golden hair. They looked robust and well fed, and not at all overworked.

In spite of their slow-moving propensities the people here have neatly kept farms and homes, and though their progress is tortoise-like, they get there at last, unworried and, generally, in sound condition. What we do not do to-day we prefer to do to-morrow, is the sum total of the impressions I received of the tone and tenor of their work-day habits. People actually live the simple life over here; and although they spend a good deal of time in eating, say four or five times a day, with occasional coffee-drinking between, slipping in a nap or two on top, they do it utterly without flourishes. This enables the housewife to make her escape out into God's air and sunshine and also to help with the outside work. The women are seen everywhere, even at the polls.

We lingered along the roadside, admiring the flowers, of which there is an endless variety, all so beautiful that we could make no choice, and hence plucked none, from sheer indecision. Anyway, a flower loses too much of its charm and meaning to be thus ruthlessly torn from its setting. I like to admire the peculiarities of each separate kind as it appears, unblemished, in its own



Drawing by E. Biorn.

Norwegian Homestead with "Stabur."

domain; it being impossible to fall rightly in love with a lot of pretty faces, kidnapped in a bunch, and dying ones at that. There are almost as many flowers as there are blades of grass, and it is no wonder the tiny Jersey-like cows that eat both, making no discrimination, are such esthetic-looking creatures. Sometimes we would forget to go on, tarrying in the woods, studying the trees by the wayside. The spruce is the loveliest, I think, and

also the most valuable, for it provides fuel and lumber worth millions. So also does the Scotch fir. They grow amicably side by side, but sometimes they part company, the spruce going east, and the Scotch fir wandering towards the rather treeless west coast, where it is found in groves, and also scatteringly in uninviting places, where the spruce never has the temerity to follow. We saw the jolly fir, breezily waving its arms in the wind, tiptoeing on impossible ledges that appeared to be quite bare of soil. The birch loves to have as its companions, the spruce and fir, and snuggles in between, wherever there is a chance. Sometimes we could see it sallying bravely forth, forming groves of its own; also, I was greatly surprised to meet with it far up the mountain sides, ever so much higher than either of its companions dared venture. It had grown old and dwarfed from the fierce exposure and strenuous climb.

We were careful not to disturb the birds, for it was still nesting time with some of them, or at least, school time for their homely offspring. There was evidently much tutoring going on, since we could hear snatches of song and subdued warblings whenever we had a mind to listen. The school of flying being in session, we were given an opportunity to witness many an amazing flight, ill-starred, and otherwise. We had chanced upon the midst of a birds' paradise. The various families foregather in the early summer, obeying their instinct, and then there is glorious music in the northland. The sun rides so high in the heavens that it scarcely sets during mid-summer, and the birds just can't go to sleep when bed-time comes, but rollick around and sing as if their tiny bodies would burst from joyous exertion. Even

human beings catch the contagion, and join in the chorus, inspired thereto by those glorious Norwegian nights.

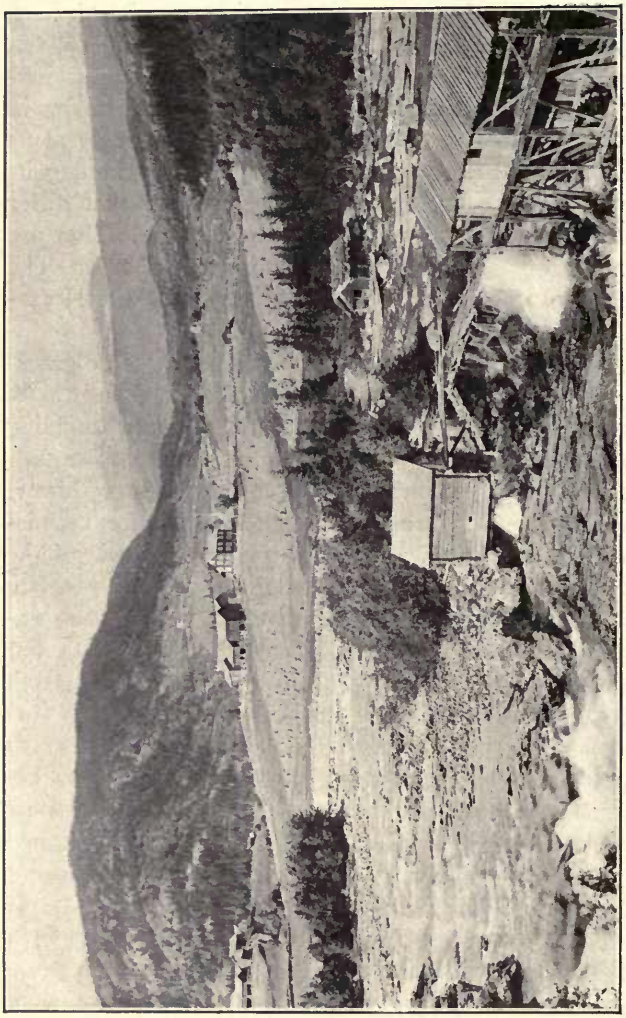
We brushed elbows with a hog while pursuing the even tenor of our way, no one being surprised, he the least of all. He grunts with joyous satisfaction at the general state of things, the livelong day, and well he may, for he is the most pampered creature in the country. We saw few homes where they kept more than one, there being but one pig for every eight persons, they say. He gets all the left-over morsels — the dog just hates him — and is stroked and squeezed by everybody. No wonder he thrives and is so utterly good-natured. In return he yields up his flesh — made from barley, oats and the afore-mentioned morsels — with merely an expostulating squeal, and the table is forthwith provided with meat that is as tender and fine-tasting as chicken.

For every two persons we met we might figure on meeting about one hen, scarcely any more, this being the usual ratio. They are rather small, but very spry and useful. They make no pretensions as to breed, cheerfully content with their plebeian ancestry. They cackle, fight, and scratch up the garden, like well brought-up hens the world over. They set with dogged determination, feeling within their rights, for they are good egg-layers. The rooster, though rather slim and dusty-looking, being of an off-color, strutted about with the usual amount of arrogance and empty-headed concern. There is but one such fellow to manage each flock, and, there being no other to dispute his doings, he may crow in peace without being choked off by envious competitors.

Little black, skunk-like dogs barked vehemently at us as we passed the premises each one seemed to own. Some big cats lay near the road in deep lethargy, eyes

apparently closed and unseeing, motionless. Scat! Nobody said a word, but there ensued a series of sudden hoarse sniffs, several silent black streaks, and in a twinkling the birds had some highly undesirable companions in the tree-tops. They looked hard and unblinkingly at us from above, with sinister, gleaming eyes, beckoning us on and away. At night they hold concerts that differ widely from the bird-choruses of the daytime. They are very large cats, with corresponding vocal chords. The feline choruses of the long winter nights of the Northland are famous.

Troughs of various degrees of clumsiness or gracefulness were placed along the roadside, here and there, to catch water from trickling little streams tumbling down the mountain side, providing refreshment for each passer-by, man or beast. The horses, when thirsty, turn towards these troughs without looking for permission from the driver. And they seem to do most of the managing otherwise as well, for they generally regulate the speed and the number of short stops judged necessary. They plod slowly up-hill, halting frequently, but down-hill they make up for lost time, not wholly from choice, however. They let themselves fall recklessly forward with a great to-do of clattering hoofs, so as to keep from under the swaying vehicle thundering on behind. They swing their heads in every direction to show their independence. They do not enjoy being checked up. In fact they will not permit it. This overbearing attitude may be explained by the scarcity of horses — one horse to sixteen persons in Norway. When once in a great while we happened to ride behind them in the Norwegian two-wheeled carts commonly in use, we were made to feel all the gyrations of the stiff-necked creature's body; if he stumbled in a rut, we became unwil-



A "gaard" in Valdres. *Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.*

ling partakers of all his motions; when on the trot, he flung us up and down steadily and painstakingly.

We called at a house for refreshments, and were not turned away. Hospitality is the rule, money-making being, apparently, no particular object. Though the tourist traffic is bringing in a scent of it, let us hope that the day is far distant when this comfortable state of affairs shall give place to commercialism. Stout logs had been used in the erection of this house, as also in the other houses of this vicinity, and, indeed, practically all over the country. Like the majority of dwellings in this section, it was neither clapboarded nor painted, presenting a rather naked aspect to the world and the elements. The latter had unblushingly laid hand on its golden-colored nudity, and, in the course of time, tinged the logs with a blackish-brownish color. The slate roof looked very pretty. The slates were brought from the great slate quarry in East Valdres. We entered by an entrance door. There is always an extra door or so to hinder outsiders from stepping right into the bosom of the family, the first thing. The rooms were placed somewhat at random, we thought, but as tastes and customs differ greatly, we will refrain from discussing either. There was a kitchen, living-room, bed-rooms and even the proverbially unused parlor. There were plenty of chairs and benches, but no rocking-chairs. The floors were gay with rag carpets. In each window nodded a pretty house plant. The wall was adorned with an old fashioned clock, pictures of an American bride or two, a prettily ornamented shelf containing copies of the local paper, a few books of devotion, some hymn-books, and the Bible. No horrid yellow journals littered the tables, or disturbed the serenity of the rather bare, but clean-looking walls.

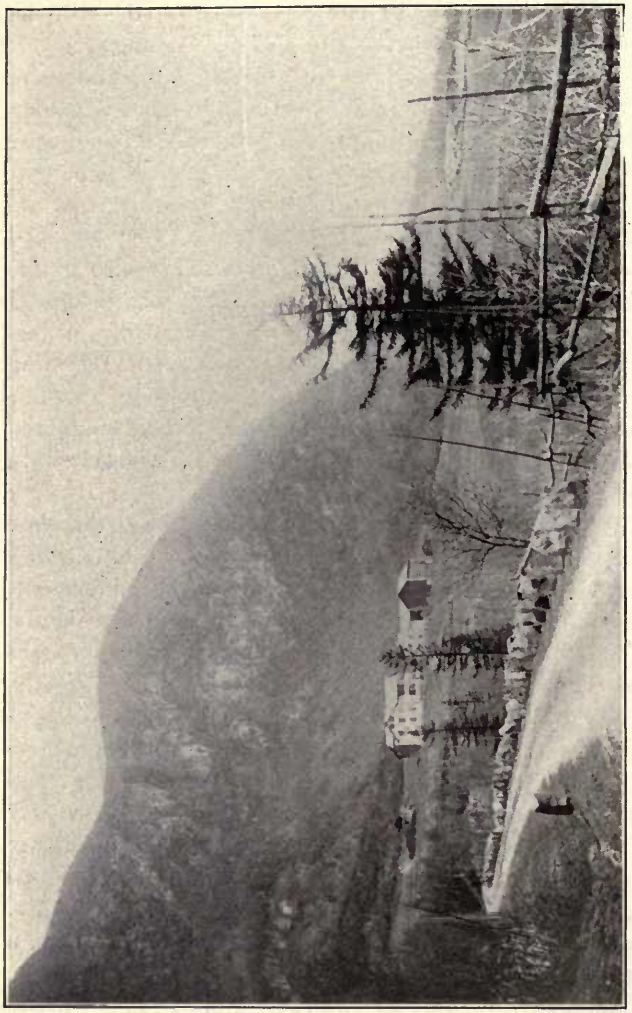


Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

Öylo Hotel.

There was an air of wholesome calm about it all — no danger of stepping on anyone's toes in a community like this. By the way, wooden shoes are much used, being also symbols of peace. Whoever heard of a thief or marauding villain prowling about in wooden shoes? And there are few if any such characters here.

Towards four o'clock, our feet, which had nobly carried us this far, clamored for consideration, and we were glad to rest from our sight-seeing. The moment we set eyes on the Öylo hotel, we made for it by the shortest course.

Some one has said that rest is the most delicious of bodily enjoyments. If it be true, let us suggest that to eat well-prepared food comes next. The home-like hostelries, scattered as by accident all about, sometimes by the roadside, sometimes far above it, amply provide for these things.

My companions went back by "Kariole," to their hotel, having had enough exercise to last the day. Let it be here explained that this vehicle, according to one facetious etymologist, takes its name from the first couple that used it. Kari, the wife, was set on having her name, alone, perpetuated by the vehicle, but honest Ole, the husband, wouldn't agree to this. The minister, happening to pass that way while the dissension was in progress, and being a peacemaker, was struck by a bright idea. He suggested that they should meet half-way, merge into one, as it were, the same as when he tied the nuptial knot, and call the conveyance a Kari-Ole. Ole liked the idea first-rate, and Kari, utterly at a loss for words to continue the argument, maintained a silence which was construed as consent. So "Kariole" the vehicle has been called to this day.

CHAPTER III

Thrilling Experiences in the Mountains

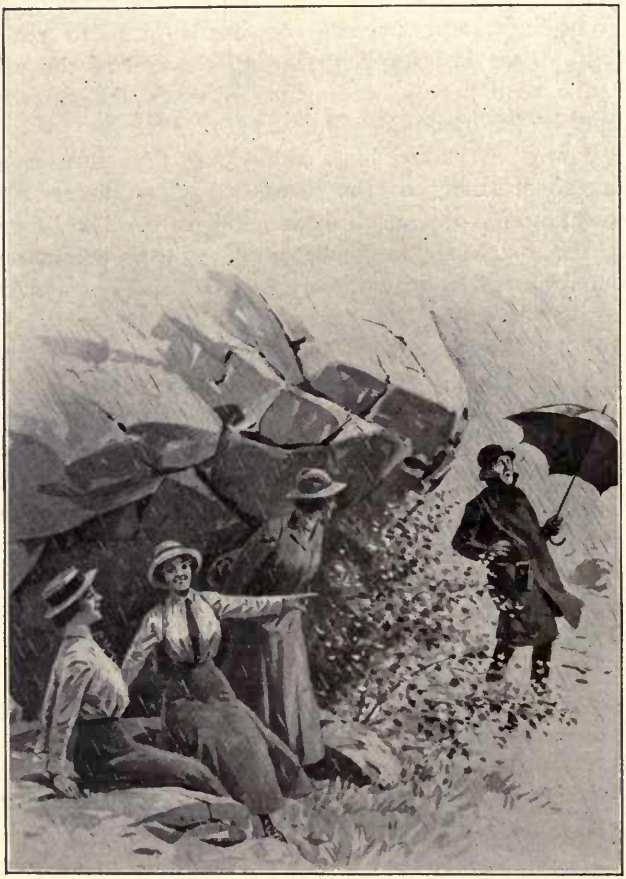
I WAS left to make history all by myself the next day, and trudged on lonesome enough, murmuring a little against fate which had one day brought me into such hearty companionship with the jolly Finn and the loquacious Ulla, only to tear us ruthlessly and forever apart, the next. Like the little boy who for lack of a playmate made friends with a post, I looked about for some such consolation and saw, beckoning to me, not only posts and the cutest fences, but all nature in her most smiling mood decked out with lovely fjords, tumbling water-falls, and majestic snow-clad mountains. I took to them at once, being completely enthralled, forgetting for the time being the conviviality of yesterday, and the days gone before. And I was glad that I could forget; otherwise the poor little brain would burst from the numerous and all too vivid impressions. One mountain especially attracted me, bearing, as it did, an almost personal expression, interrogating, as it were, with ever-varying features, the Thing creeping along at its base. It challenged one to guess the wonderful secrets it concealed. The old Vikings had this all figured out and settled. They believed that in the interior were vast rooms where the "Jotuls," the great mountain giants, lived. From Jotul comes the name Jotunheim (Home of the Jotuls).

I passed along Vangsmjøsen, the loveliest lake one can see, had bread and cheese at Grindaheim where I

regretted that I wasn't an artist to paint the magnificent surroundings, and, pressing on, made haste to reach Skogstad, the last stopping-place at the end of the valley, the road here ascending to Framnes, the gateway proper of the mountain wilderness.

I was overtaken by a rain-cloud, first seen magnificently forming in the distance. Upon nearer approach, it mirrored itself beautifully in the lake, flinging, also, its clearly outlined shadow against a precipitous mountain wall across the fjord, and finally, without warning, darkening the heavens about, enfolding me in a sudden shower. As I hurried along under my umbrella, I happened to give vent to a loud sneeze, which, to my intense surprise, was heard and enjoyed by a party of pedestrians, happy female tourists, who had taken refuge under a projecting rock by the roadside. A burst of merriment, of uncontrollable laughter, startled me nearly out of my wits, but I had presence of mind enough to proceed mechanically on, having conquered the habit of looking furtively behind me on such occasions. I had seen this rollicking crowd far in advance; but who would have dreamed that they would happen to be eavesdropping just at the psychological moment of the unlooked-for explosion? Although it had no effect on the downpour, it dispelled the gloom — for them. Tourists, let loose, are like children; they glory in tomfoolery.

The mountains were very high, quite precipitous, and very wonderfully formed on either side as I proceeded along the valley; and see them all I must, but to enjoy them it became necessary to hold the head back at an extremely uncomfortable angle. It was very fatiguing work, being hard on the eyes and neck, while



Drawing by E. Biorn.

A rollicking crowd.

the gait became very erratic and uncertain. But it paid. There were glorious sights to be seen up there, and down here, behind, and everywhere. In one place there was a fantastic formation of the cliffs, which looked like a huge decayed tooth set on edge. It appeared as though it might once have been a molar in a Jotul's mouth. There had evidently been big doings in the mountain when that particular member came out, much loose rock lying scattered about. And what of the travail that preceded it? It must have been an earthquake. In several places I could see where huge fragments of rock which I passed had formerly lain imbedded in the mountain above. In some places there were millions of fragments, large and small, strewn about. I was continually on the look-out, in no little trepidation, for missiles that I feared might possibly come hurtling down from above; but the rocks all retained their balance that day. During protracted wet spells in the spring, outlying rocks have a tendency to loosen, some being washed out. Though such a thing has happened, it is exceedingly seldom anyone is caught by these rocky missiles.

To see the sun from my valley seek its couch early in the afternoon, as its quivering rim took the final peep over the hoary tops of the Jotunheim, radiating beams of light in all directions, and suggesting the final dash of spray flung from the fringe of a passing shower, formed a glorious subject for brush and pencil; but, alas, it will never be perfectly reproduced even by the most skillful artist. As soon as the sun had bid good night, the mountains began to frown, and I at once felt rather shut off and hemmed in. I decided then and there that I should never wish to live in a mountain valley. Oh,

for a glimpse of my prairie home in the West, where the sun sets in a haze of glory, kissing the earth good night at the proper time, and sending its departing rays lovingly back and with wonderful effect into magical cloud formations that at times resemble mountains, but are, if possible, more beautiful.

Skogstad hotel is now one of the has-beens, having been superseded by hotels nearer the snow line, whither the whim of the present day tourist trends. It still has some custom, being situated at the base of the steep incline which leads into the regions of perpetual snow, but its popularity is rapidly waning, being as nothing compared to what it was in the olden days, before the time of automobiles and mountain hostelries. The course of the tourist stream is changeable and erratic. Where in places it flows steadily and unceasingly, it may unexpectedly take a spasmodic turn and eventually dwindle away, choosing a course in another direction and abandoning its former haunts almost entirely. As new fields are conquered, hotels spring up as if by magic, to meet all demands. In one place, where I arrived tired, footsore and hungry, instead of meeting with the usual smiling face of an ever-attentive maid at the door, my own answering smile being all prepared, it — the conquering smile — faded sadly away when, in answer to my knock, what I thought to be the welcome patter of pretty feet proved to be the scampering of rats. I had struck an abandoned house.

A gradually ascending road, though level to the eye, is not accepted as such by tired legs. After much strenuous walking and hard breathing I arrived at a place where the road forked. Here I was in a quandary, not being fully decided whether I wanted to

take the west fork, which led past File Mountain, the road which grandfather took, or, whether I should make a detour, go northeast through darkest Jotunheim, climb Galdhøppigen Mountain and later, after having passed through Lom and Sogn, recover grandfather's tracks at Lardalsøren. A voice whispered: You are not prepared for such a journey. Another said: You are afraid! I was on my mettle at once, and flung back, almost without thinking: "I will climb Galdhøpiggen, just because I am afraid, so there!" And I did, but not yet. The die was cast, and I struck out hurriedly to the right, once the decision was made, so as to be quickly rid of prudent questionings and uncertainties.

After a little, I met with some road laborers, who told me I could gain much time by taking a short cut up the mountain side instead of following the windings of the main road. I decided to take that path. I felt that I was in for it now, anyway, and hence might as well begin with a mild adventure at once, thus preparing myself by degrees for sterner ones to follow. The eyes did not try to fool me here, it being useless, as the steepness was so decided that it rose up right before me so that I could touch it by reaching out my hands. On one of these perilously precipitous slopes I chanced upon some sweet-faced, patient-looking cows, and they gazed mildly and questioningly at me, as if to say: "We are sorry for you! We are looking for grass; otherwise we shouldn't be here." Nor I, had I known the territory. The cows, seeming to realize this, sadly lowered their heads as if to show their sympathy, and began again their usual absent-minded cropping. When I finally regained the road, all perspiration, eyes starting from their sockets, and blood boiling, I was obliged to rest,

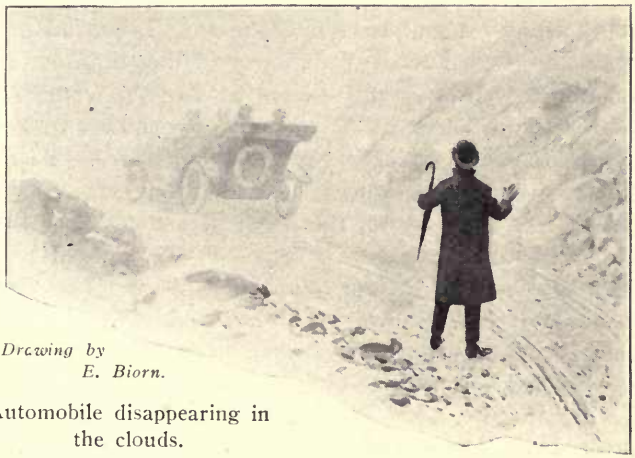
and speculated the while on the foolishness of man in general. The most galling thing of all was to find myself painfully stiff when I rose to continue my journey. Some lady tourists who kept to the road had, meanwhile, tortoise-like, almost caught up with the "palpitating hare," finally passing him gaily by, immaculate as ever.

The spruce, the fir, and the birch had said their good-byes, each in its turn, and I now found myself at a height where I had to console myself with mere mountain moss, blueberries, and stray mountain flowers. In sunny, highly favored places, there grow tufts of grass at surprisingly high altitudes. The sheep and even the cattle, not to mention the ubiquitous goat, hunt these choices tidbits. On the heights one may suddenly be startled by moving things, which may be taken for mountain hobgoblins or even worse; and amidst the strange surroundings, the peculiar colorings and predominating greyish tone of it all, it takes the untrained eye quite a while to tell the difference between rolling stones, gnomes, and a foraging goat. The poor eye is continually at a loss in such odd surroundings, for neither can it judge distance properly nor rightly interpret colorings.

Proceeding, I came upon a great number of stones, large and small, dropped from nowhere, scattered loosely about on the mountain tops. Some lay near the edges ready to fall, yet hesitating, as if dreading to let go on account of the fearful drop. While pondering Nature's seemingly careless methods as here exemplified, my contemplations were disturbed by some autos speeding quickly by and disappearing in the low-lying clouds.

Those swift chariots looked comfortable, indeed; but one glance at the perilous mountain road over which they flew decided me in favor of my slower means of progress.

I caught up with the autos at the Framnes hotel, placed at the so-called portal of Jotunheim. It stands at the very edge of Tyinn lake, one of the highest, if



Drawing by E. Biorn.

Automobile disappearing in the clouds.

not the highest, of mountain lakes in Norway, of any size. It is almost wholly surrounded by snow peaks. The event of the day was dinner, as usual. We eat to live, of course, but up here everybody reverses the old adage and eats with a frank enjoyment in the act. We had venison, fish, potatoes and gravy, and rice pudding with blueberries and cream. There was but very little bread on the table, as Norwegians only nibble a morsel of it at dinner. The guests mingled freely like old acquaintances, forgetting all about introductions and such

ceremonies, having discarded all but the most pressing of forms and conventions when they passed the cloud line.

After the afternoon coffee, the majority boarded a modest little motor-boat which had slipped in, ever so quietly, during the half-stupor following upon dinner. The tiny craft loked so unreal in these surroundings that we hesitated about trusting our precious selves to its frail keeping. But it suddenly took matters into its own hands and rushed off with its party of dawdling dreamers before we were fully aware of it. We could see nothing at any distance, on account of a shower of rain that accompanied us nearly the entire distance. To me it was a refreshing sight, because it came down like a real western shower, not the usual tiresome drizzle that is so commonly seen in Norway. As we did not have much else to occupy our attention, we watched with curious interest the drops as they fell, with many a splash, into the seemingly ever-unprepared, unsuspecting, yielding bosom of the lake. The cabin had mirrors, slanting inward, over the windows, and the reflection of the water immediately beneath made it appear as if we were sailing upside-down, or in a submarine boat, with windows in the roof. The effect was weird in the extreme; we decided that we were in a genuine fairy boat, after all. As the shower obscured the view, our field-glasses and other sight-seeing paraphernalia were of no use; so we fell back on unaided eyesight. Then, having had our fill of watching the rain, we began to examine one another. Penned in, face to face, we had an excellent opportunity for mutual scrutiny. What, after all, is so interesting as this furtive analysis of

strange faces, provided only that our own be exempted from the ordeal?

The queer way one English lady was dressed, and her really wonderful accent and enunciation, proved to our satisfaction that we had not been mistaken in the abnormal character of our craft. She led an unwilling, unappreciative husband about, fore and aft and everywhere, while he yawned in answer to her talk. We liked her, though, for she made company and showered pleasant looks about. Blessed be the fellow traveller who doesn't look glum and isn't above talking about nothing, especially in a fog or when it rains. The captain, engineer, and ticket-puncher were one and the same person, who looked for all the world like a dried-up and wrinkled Yankee. And, sure enough, he had tasted American life a number of years as boss thresher and engineer, but had now, for reasons best known to himself, returned to his native heath once more. He thought he spoke English as though he knew no other language, but no one else thought so. I have met several such homing birds who claim they have forgotten the only language they really know in, say, a six years' stay in America, and upon their return pester the natives and others with a conglomeration difficult for anyone to understand.

The other passengers consisted mostly of Norwegians and Danes, who were all so quiet and unassuming that they merged, as it were, into the general landscape, reminding one, with their yellowish rubber coats and wraps, of khaki-colored soldiers.

While on board this boat I learned that the outlets of the twin lakes Tyinn and Bygdin are to be dammed

up, making them several feet deeper, thus imprisoning countless cubic feet more of the inflow, enabling the power plants to tap therefrom a steady supply of water the year around. It is led through big iron pipes into the valleys, thousands of feet below, plunging downwards with incredible swiftness and force.

The busy motor labored steadily for over an hour to carry us over this lazy mountain pool, and once over we were hailed with vociferous acclaim by the proprietor and guests of Tyinnholm Hotel. But I was obliged to forego the pleasure of closer comradeship, having planned to climb "Skindheggen" and reach "Eidsbugaren," before nightfall.

I found Eidsbugaren Hotel situated about half an hour's walk from Lake Tyinn, overlooking Lake Bygdin. The road leading to it had been well made as far as the hotel, but dwindled into a mere mountain path beyond. Having come about half-way, I fell in with an old man who met my advances most heartily, volunteering to give me all the information he possessed regarding the mountain I wished to climb. It lay on our right, quite unassuming in appearance; but I hadn't climbed it yet. The old man told me he had climbed it once, taking the path which led from Eidsbugaren. I asked him if I could reach the top by a short cut right across from where we stood. He thought, perhaps I might. I asked further if there was any danger of my sinking into bogs, crashing through treacherous ice, or meeting with any other disaster. He thought not. With such solid assurance to gird me and strengthen my feet, I set bravely forth. A lady whom I had greeted at Tyinnholm hotel, happening to pass by, regarded me fixedly as though taking her last look.

I started off full speed at once, as genuine greenhorns nearly always do. On account of the indescribable roughness of the ground my steps were uneven and irregular, with much stumbling and staggering. I made quite rapid headway in my own style, however, but got most uncomfortably warm, obtaining relief only by flinging open my coat and vest to the breeze. There were no trees, but plenty of moss and shapeless stones, with here and there stray wisps of grass. There were innumerable little bogs and valleys, the former not without peril to my progress. But the bogs bore me up most obligingly, and scarcely a tremor did I feel. When passing through the little valleys I felt very lonesome, for I was quite shut off from the world, the view being obstructed in every direction except directly overhead, where the familiar, friendly blue gave encouragement, cheerily beckoning me on. Each time I emerged from a valley I expected to find myself near the mountain-top, which seemed but a stone's throw away, but this never happened. Yet, after numberless repetitions and disappointments, it finally seemed to me that I had actually gained on that elusive top — a very little. My exertions became frantic, and, happening now for the first time to glance around, I was startled at the height I had already attained. The road looked no bigger than a piece of twine; the hotels resembled match-boxes. This moment's halt convinced me, also, that I had a heart. It was beating violently, and I was panting for breath and perspiring freely. My gaze was lifted for an instant from below, and I had a glimpse of coming glories; but I resolutely shut my eyes to them till I might enjoy them undisturbed from the outlook at the top. My head would turn now and then in spite of myself, and my eyes would

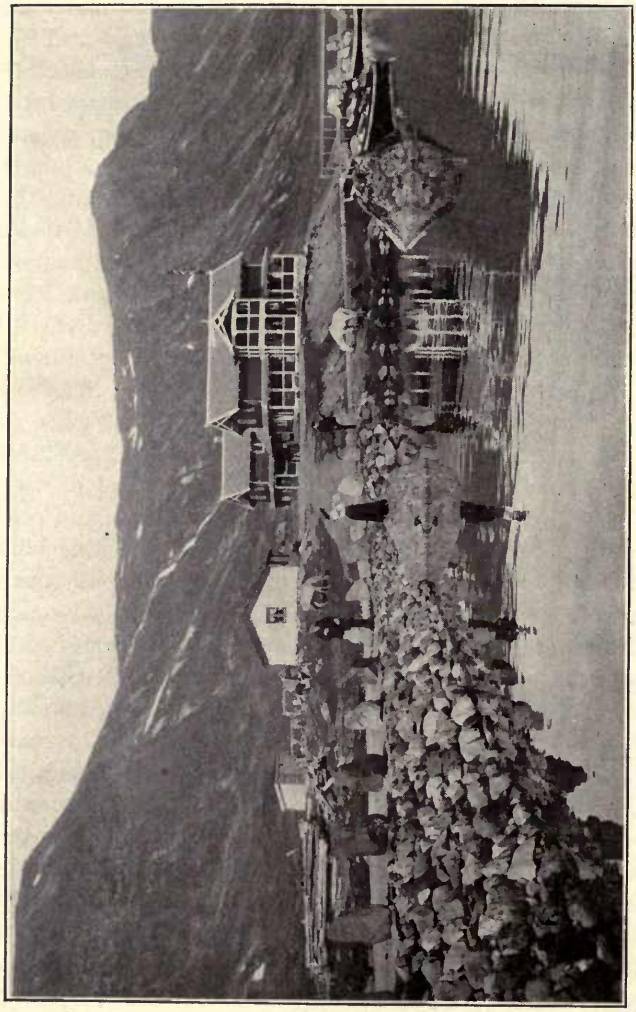
take furtive peeps, blaming meanwhile the restless head for leading them into temptation. What could one do with such unruly members?

After a well-nigh interminable climb over moss-banks and other banks, spiteful little mountain brooklets, ancient snowbeds that sounded hollow under my tread, acres of loose rocks and boulders, where the water hissed between, and where missteps and tricky stones nearly sent me sprawling — after all this, and more besides, I finally arrived, panting, at the top. Soon the clouds obligingly parted, enabling the setting sun to scatter his dying rays profusely about, richly enhancing the wonders of the scene I turned to gaze upon.

In the raptures which followed I momentarily ceased breathing, and in the all-pervading stillness there floated earthwards, spoken as from afar, the inspired utterance: "Lord what am I that Thou art mindful of me." Overcome by the sense of my own littleness, I nevertheless compared the helpless immovability of these grand mountains with my own freedom to go whithersoever I chose, and I regained some measure of confidence at the thought that the smallest of immortal human beings is infinitely more to the Creator than all the towering peaks of Norway. Like a forest of spires appeared the serried ranks of heavenward-pointing mountain peaks, some of them clad in their primeval garments of snow, others gleaming blue or green in mantles of ice, and still others disclosing, here and there, their naked rock formation. Between my mountain and the sun the hither side of the distant peaks showed forbidding, but the summits were rimmed as with purest gold. As I turned away from the sun toward the opposite side there was revealed to view the full glory of sky and mountain as

the departing orb of day, twice magnified, and robed in fairest hues, threw back a good-night kiss.

Glancing about I took note of a greyish-looking object creeping stealthily up the mountain side toward me. It was not a wolf, dear reader, only a bit of fog, a thing far more dangerous than a wolf, coming as a harbinger of evil, and settling like a pall over my spirits and the scenery. At sight of it I hastened with all speed down the mountain-side. Though the fog spread threateningly, the main body of it did not catch me, and I arrived at my destination safe and sound but drenched with perspiration. They had been on the lookout for me at the hotel, my approach having been noted even by the lady manager, who appeared before me in the guise of a mountain fairy, dressed in fantastic country costume and coming far up the road to offer the hand of welcome. I had not often been made so much of, and considering the exalted state of my feelings, all this kind attention proved to be almost more than I could tranquilly bear. The situation was saved by the wise one offering at the outset a few commonplace remarks, letting me gently down to earth again. My old road acquaintance had worried a great deal, and when finally the wanderer turned up, he beamed and cackled as only a friendly old man can or will do. The table was piled high with good things. The young fairy seemed to exist for nothing else than to hover near and see that the belated guest was properly served, he in turn forgetting entirely that she was paid to do it, that others were treated just as considerately, etc., etc. The other guests dispersed from before the open fire to give the newly arrived wanderer the most comfortable place, nothing being too good to offer a stranger in need.



Eidsbugaren Hotel. *Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.*

Human companionship is a good thing; my lonesome mountain trip had taught me that, sharply whetting my desire for it. At such times one can hardly refrain from giggling at every word that is said, nor from caressing every shoulder, or slapping every knee within arm's reach. We smiled lovingly at each other above smoking pipes, and I remember taking deep draughts of the smoke-laden air, smoke that had already explored the recesses of every man's lungs in the room, and that otherwise would have been obnoxious to me, but was now tolerated, yea enjoyed, considering the occasion. In our readiness to laugh, the climax of every story told was killed, the noise of mirth utterly overwhelming the vehicles which should give it cause.

We were put to bed, one apiece, in single, narrow little beds with a board in front to keep us from tumbling out. Broadly speaking, this gives the Norwegian a certain sense of security when he sleeps. For a covering I had a quilt stuffed with feathers, but feeling chilly in the cool rarefied mountain air, after my recent frenzied exertions, I added two more belonging to unused beds in the same tiny room, snuggling happily underneath with deep chuckles of contentment.

It was a long time before I felt any drowsiness, having exerted myself too violently during the day, and also expecting every moment the coming of darkness. But the daylight continued all night. I lay long watching the snow-capped mountains through my window, a prey to their hypnotic influence. So tense became my gaze that they finally took to moving, exchanging position, nodding to each other, and doing other ridiculous things. After they began to dance I do not remember clearly any more; only I had a vague feeling as of be-

ing under them and that they were all feathers. I made a desperate effort to shake them off, and awoke just in time to see the two upper feather quilts sliding to the floor. I was wide awake on the instant, feeling, at the same time, desperate pangs of hunger. This I was luckily enabled to satisfy by devouring the lunch the hotel maids had prepared for an early morning start. To the future recurrence of hunger I gave no thought.

CHAPTER IV

An Excursion with the Dane and his Daughter

THERE was no more dreaming for me that night, the body refusing to become quiescent after enduring such rapturous torments during the day. We were to start for Gjendeboden at six, but as the Dane and his daughter, who were to accompany me, failed to appear even after I had waited for an hour for them, I started out alone. Just before leaving, I viewed the hut of the poet Vinje where years ago he used to seek the solitude of the mountains to create lofty verse that was to set future generations thinking.

My way led over a narrow log, nearly two rods long, spanning a rushing mountain torrent, where the swirl and turmoil drove the passer-by nearly distracted, and the dizzy height of the frail bridge increased the danger of the passage. Finding nothing but cow tracks beyond the log, I wondered if I had unwittingly come in the wake of the cattle instead of following the paths of my own kind. I kept moving on, however, till even the cow tracks disappeared, when I decided to pause and reconnoiter. I then took my first look downwards, toward the hotel, and saw to my surprise that several people were leveling their glasses at me. I comprehended the situation at once. I was on the wrong track! But I wouldn't own up before all those people, and suddenly sat down, as if allowing myself a much needed rest. I sat uncomfortably still for a while, but soon tiring of this I began picking flowers, meanwhile saun-

tering idly back in the direction I had come. After I had gathered a bouquet large enough to fill several baskets, and rested more than amply in return for the extra effort of yesterday, the Dane and his daughter appeared, each astride a horse. I silently fell in with them and my secret was safe; no one knew I had been lost.

We meandered along the shores of Lake Bygdin for an hour or so before beginning the steep climb which leads over the high ridge separating it from its neighbor, Lake Gjendin. Here the Dane and his daughter were obliged to dismount, as the ponies had all they could do to drag themselves up the steep incline. The good old Dane would fain have ridden, for his heart was weak. Noting a great waterfall near our path, he exclaimed: "Oh, why is that water so uselessly toppling over the cliff yonder? If it were harnessed to an elevator, I could become a passenger, and be spared the tortures of this climb." Oh fie! to think of spoiling the picturesqueness of old Jotunheim by putting in such modern improvements as that! Please allow us to get into the mountains, to a taste of the primitive, and be rid of modern vehicles for a day.

The rarefied mountain air was expired as soon as drawn in, the lungs finding it thin and unsatisfying, yet compelled to use it. The heart would, now and then, slip a cog or two in sympathy — thus quoth the Dane. His seventeen-year-old minx of a daughter sped like a goat up the incline, being seemingly unaware of the presence of any such organ, she having — who knows? — perhaps already lost hers. She edged as closely as possible to where the leaping waters roared and thundered. There is peculiar fascination in tempting fate, especially for young folks, and not the least when standing on the

brink of a precipice or beside a roaring waterfall. The seething, hissing water seemed to invite participation in its frightful play, the flying forms of foam reaching out with beckoning arms, as if eager to caress and clasp the dizzy victim in their hollow embrace. No wonder the old, experienced Dane held his hand ready to hinder the swaying of the thoughtless thing leaning over the abyss, should the call of the swirling, maddening element enthrall her senses.

Once past the steepest places, the Dane and his daughter mounted their respective steeds again, I following behind in the same fashion as before. Though we did not pass any snow-drifts, we met with but very little vegetation, even the moss having disappeared. There were bare, dreary-looking rocks below and above, around us and everywhere, of various shapes and sizes; also innumerable loose stones of no particular pattern, lying in wait along our path, seemingly assembled on purpose to dispute our progress and make trouble. The ponies, however, through much practice had become pretty well used to them. It was interesting to watch their legs from behind as they were lifted and flung in every direction to avoid those horrid obstructions. Their hind legs, especially, seemed to have eyes of their own.

While we were in the midst of this dreary region where noise seldom intrudes, all forms of life keeping a proper distance, the stillness was suddenly broken by the shrill, penetrating scream of an eagle. Soon its mate joined in with a still wilder cry, and their voices, blending in vociferous protest, told us very plainly that they not only saw us, but hotly resented our intrusion. It appeared that they had their home on a neighboring peak to the left. "Oh," exclaimed the girl, "how I should

like to have a peep at the nest and the ugly nestlings, all surrounded by bleached bones and bloody feathers!" Upon second thought, however, she concluded she would as lief not see the nest, owing to its gory aspect, and since the owners were hopping mad and had talons. Besides, it would be a matter of some effort to reach it, the eagles, true to their instinct, having selected their family retreat, even in this out of the way place, in the most inaccessible spot to be found.

Having come about half-way, we reached a level spot where grass had dared to take root, even having had the temerity to carpet the ground with a pale green. Here we met an aged couple, a minister and his wife, who sat eating bread and cheese, hungry and happy, and as chipper as could be. How we all admired them! To think of their amiable boldness in pushing into these wilds on such tottering limbs, and at their time of life! They loved the mountains, they said, and could not stay away. They told us of another aged enthusiast, aged seventy-nine, who this summer made his thirtieth annual climb. May he make thirty more!

After the halt, the ponies walked along briskly, having in view the feed boxes at Gjendeboden, and being now on the downward incline, which led to our destination. They had evidently rested well the day before, and now made use of their stored-up strength in rapidly outstripping the tired chronicler of these events. I thought the Dane would have divined my predicament, and would have dismounted to stretch his long legs a bit, thus allowing my trembling ones a brief respite astride his sprightly steed; but this did not seem to occur to him. Our divinity in front forgot us entirely and swung joyfully along in splendid style, the faster the better. But I

determined not to get left, hating to be mooning around alone, so drew on a supply of strength left over from former times, let the will take command, and was surprised to find how readily the drooping spirits obeyed its behests. I kept close to the merciless creature in front, and came to the hotel hot and homely, but just as promptly as she. I was in no particularly sweet mood to return her congratulations, but cheered up a bit when I heard her complain of stiffness, and felt a deep satisfaction in knowing that the morrow would find her limbs in a much worse condition than mine, she not being used to riding.

I ought to have been hungry, but the violent exertion had destroyed my appetite for the time being. Dinner threatening to become stale, I did manage to eat, but with no relish whatever. I rose from the table with the sensations of a man who has gone through a useless ceremony and continued a purposeless habit, which, however, he feels intuitively that he can not lightly break away from. Leaning back in my chair, I noted a certain blurring before the eyes, upon which I decided to try the recuperating effect of a nap.

I slept in a newly built pine cottage, where the rooms were of the tiniest and the partitions scarcely more than screens, allowing free passage to every slightest sound. But as sleep is common property in the mountains, few were disturbed. All the beds creaked and were rather hard; but everyone, without grumbling, took to his couch, obeying the sweet, soothing call of nature, and forgetting all about the usual springs and feathers and pillows of down. The furnishings were, otherwise, beautifully simple; but as "man wants but little here below," no one complained. The cheap look-

ing-glass discovered irregularity of feature where none had been before. If soap was asked for, it was charged as "extra." Many performed their ablutions, soapless and without ceremony, in the soft, clean snow. There was abundant good cheer, though few modern conveniences in this remote and primitive hostelry. But no one lived any less fully, thought less clearly, or aspired less nobly, because of the lack of a few superfluities which, at home, have grown to be part and parcel of our very selves. In the mountains one comes to think that too much luxury makes us blasé, inclining us to turn away from the poetry of life.

We found here a whole family that had fled from civilization and appeared clad in bloomers, closely fitting woolen jackets, Santa Claus caps, and iron-rimmed boots with ample room for the feet. It was difficult to distinguish the male head of this family, for he wore fluffy knee-breeches and other garments to match, and, when ensconced in the bosom of his flock, might easily have been taken for the wife and mother, so far as costume was concerned. They refused to be upset by curious looks, returning glance for glance, in complete freedom from self-consciousness. They hopped, they danced, they laughed, making merry till the very hills sang with sympathetic murmers. They "seasoned their repast with mirth," and enjoyed to the full every breath of the bracing mountain air.

I could have resigned myself indefinitely to these happy surroundings, but the call of the wild was upon me, Galdhøpiggen beckoned in the distance, and on I must go.

CHAPTER V

I Push on with a Guide

THOUGH it rained and stormed in the morning, the nap of yesterday and a good night's sleep had rejuvenated the body and revived the spirits, enabling me to laugh in the face of the elements as we fared forth. I had not the regulation tourist trappings, consisting of heavy boots, thick clothing, rainproof coat and a bag of extra raiment on my back, but merely an every day outfit of calf-skin shoes, rubbers, light underclothing, cheviot suit and ulster, a stand-up collar, stiff hat, and a faded-looking umbrella to top off with. Had I known for a certainty when I deposited my baggage at Fagerlund hotel that I was destined for devious ways among sleeping hills beyond the clouds, with no date set for the return, I should, no doubt, have made due provision as the others did.

The mirth-provoking umbrella proved to be invaluable as a protection from the pelting, driving rain, to which my umbrella-less guide was mercilessly exposed. But, drenched to the skin though he soon became, he minded it not, being of a sturdy frame and in perfect health. He walked ahead and I in his footsteps. Peering forth under the rim of my umbrella, I took such note of the surroundings as I could in the fog and rain. Some intrepid mountain flowers, in full bloom, were visible beneath a protecting ledge, and from their cozy nestling place, they swayed gaily back and forth, cheering the passing plodders on their way. Ryper (ptar-

migan) hurtled by, cleaving the air with a whiz and hum, leaving us at an apparent standstill. Startled hares formed sudden streaks in the mist, picking their bewildering course with unfaltering, unerring instinct. Sly Reynard peeped forth, half wishing to pursue, yet mindful of the comfort of a dry, well-kept den. The weather not suiting him at all, the bear stayed at home, licking his chaps, and preparing an appetite for the feast to

Drawing by E. Biorn.

Crossing the mountains.

come. Lemän (lemming) that had ventured away from their homes in the moss-banks under the snow, lay strewn about, dying and dead, thus paying for their too great temerity. The guide spoke of Gjerv (glutton), but look as we might, none of these scavengers could be seen. The reindeer stayed out in the rain, feeding on moss, darting hither and thither, fleet as the dawn, cooling off on seemingly inaccessible snow beds by day, and seeking shelter, who knows where, at night. The song-

birds were hushed, for we had left all trees behind, only a twittering here and there betokening a few of their cousins that had come to keep us company. The quacking of ducks pierced the stillness from above, and their eager, lurching bodies sped past as if fleeing from pursuit.

The path was lost to sight, yet the guide pressed unhesitatingly, unfalteringly on, seemingly never at a loss, never in uncertainty. We labored up endless inclines, only to find others further on. We crossed miles of rough, jagged stones, appearing as if carelessly quarried; obstacles protruded from the cavernous depths, to add to our difficulties. A misstep meant bruised shins, sprains, and sometimes broken bones. Watchful eyes were necessary. Treacherous loose stones, precariously balanced, till disturbed by the tap of a passing foot, were feared the most; for, suddenly, one would play false, and unless a new footing was instantly gained, a bad fall might result. My rubbers hugged the stones firmly, enabling me to pass the day without sustaining a single fall. They were to be preferred in hopping thus from stone to stone, but, on our arrival at the snow beds, my guide, with his great boots, claimed superiority. The rubbers would sink in too deep, allowing the thawing snow to plaster the ankles, and even threatening the calves. At times they would slip off, held fast in the embracing snow. Toiling along over the snow beds, a question occurred to me, which I at once put to my guide, and in this form: "Do you suspect any treacherous places lying in wait for us?" "None at all, in these smaller drifts," came the reassuring response. But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than he disappeared. This took place near the edge of a drift, and

as he scrambled out he hastened to explain that these shallow, jagged edges would sometimes take the opportunity to trim up by letting down a passing tourist, furnishing him a scare and them a new face.

We crossed no large glaciers that day, but waded over innumerable brooklets of glacial origin, swollen by the recent protracted rain. We managed to hop across on the stones so liberally strewn about, but did not get over dry-shod. In passing over narrow ledges and gazing down stupendous heights, I took to pondering divers curious matters, not the least of which, it seemed to me, was the body's power to retain its balance. What is this mysterious directing force that causes the muscles to contract and relax, enabling the body to keep its equilibrium, while sight, thought and reason, may be occupied with a distant mountain peak? Never before had I so fully appreciated this hidden sense as on this day of perilous experience in the heart of the Jotunheim.

We saw figures of giants that almost seemed to be moving, and near the top of one mighty Jokul there appeared, silhouetted amid rocks and snow, the exact likeness of a princely black steed, rearing imperiously on its haunches, as if about to plunge down the yawning declivity in front, in one mighty, surpassing leap. Uncouth rock formations loomed menacingly above, as we timorously stole along beneath, eagerly hurrying our steps as if in apology for our unwilling trespass. We had come unbidden, happening on Nature's wash-day; hence such a scowling face and sulky reception. But as the steam-laden atmosphere of the kitchen clears when the washing is finished, so did the sun shine serenely forth as the well rinsed clouds, all strung out, willingly lent room, that its rays might have free play and brighten

our way. The rocks now remained quiescent, and the fog, panic-stricken, lifted, and bundled frantically away in vast vapory masses, seeking egress in the first available cleft or pass in the mountains. The sunbeams danced about us, kissing dry the face of the weeping rock, sparkling mischievously in the tears of the ragged heather, and peeping audaciously into sad, secret caverns, where none other might enter. They brought to view objects quite overlooked in the gloom, all now arrayed in light and sending their radiance even to the hungry soul sitting awake in our eyes. They revealed to us a beautiful little flower, the staunchest of them all, clinging to the moss at the very foot of a glacier. It never would have obtruded itself on our vision, had we not caught it unawares, leaning its head over the bosom of the snow. It had journeyed hither at the behest of its Maker, to make company for its snow-sister doomed to utter quietude and perpetual banishment from all other faces of bloom, with the accompanying twitter of life and joyousness.

Descending into a little valley sparsely clothed in vegetation, we were astonished to meet with a herd of young cattle feeding on these scanty growths. We approached warily, for fear of stampeding them, exercising such caution, also, in consideration of the possibility of their charging us. But we might have spared ourselves these stealthy, cunning moves, for they were not a bit surprised, and continued their feeding only the more energetically, as we drew near. Arrived in their midst, we were the ones who moved out of the way, not they. One steer had evidently sustained a very serious fall, for his hide was badly lacerated. The succulent grass had tempted him to stretch too far, and he, not having

goats legs, had slipped. But he seemed none the worse for his unlucky plunge, moving about as nimbly as the others. He honored us with an absent-minded glance, as if we had been of no more consequence than a hare or a mouse. The cattle were all of a small breed, being but the offshoots of those tender, esthetical-looking, flower-eating, saeter cows. They had been left by a cattle speculator in this free pasturage to fatten for market.

We carried lunches in our pockets, but were so fastidious in our selection of a halting-place that we walked by all the most favored nooks, finally settling wrathfully in the least inviting spot of all. To aggravate the situation, the clouds gathered again, and falling raindrops soaked our bread while passing from hand to mouth. The atmosphere itself was saturated. We sat in damp, dank misery for a while, till the tasteless morsels had been safely bestowed, when we stretched our clammy limbs, laboriously rose, and unenthusiastically set forth again. The guide made several ineffectual attempts to light his pipe, but failed utterly and ignominiously. To sing was an impossibility in the mood then possessing us. To talk was unpleasant, as open mouths admitted dampness. Though we did not grumble, had we met the Philosopher of Cheerfulness just then it would not have gone well with him. We sought safety in silence and ceaseless motion; pessimism is tabooed in the mountains. We walked on in the manner previously described, continuing our seesaw motion so steadily that at last it exerted upon us a half-hypnotic influence.

After what seemed an eternity my guide announced quietly that we had now entered upon the downward incline which, in an hour or so, would terminate not

far from the threshold of Spiterstulen. Upon hearing this, new life awoke within me, and I plied my companion with a rapid succession of questions. He was required to name all the snow-peaks we passed, the brooks and rivers we saw, the mosses and ferns we espied, and much else that I have forgotten. We soon entered a valley where a stream had subsided into silence and was taking a nap, though a few minutes before it had leaped in frenzied madness down the mountain side. Some frothy little bubbles remained as evidence of its former turbulence. But its rest was of short duration. We soon came to a place where a swift, smooth undercurrent was pulling it down another incline without so much as a warning ripple on its surface, only to precipitate it, headlong, into a hissing kettle below, where greenish heads of fearful-looking boulders bobbed up and down, as the helpless waters crashed down upon them. Frantically it sought exit in every direction, only to be thrown back again by solid walls of rock; but it did at last effect its escape from that seething cauldron. And so it was rushed from place to place, causing a mighty uproar for the benefit of wayfarers on its banks, and making them dumb and speechless by its incessant, deafening plaint. We crossed an angry torrent just escaped from the interior of a mighty drift, its ruffled bosom showing white from its tremendous churning in the womb of the clay-splashed, grinding, crunching, slowly shifting glacier. Such light-colored, limy, clayey matter, mingled with the water, causes the greenish tint seen in mountain lakes or adjacent fjords.

CHAPTER VI

Fun and Frolic at Spiterstulen

A FEW minutes more of stiff walking brought us to our haven of rest, the long looked-for Spiterstulen saeter hut. We dared enter without knocking, no one resenting the intrusion. We were met by the saeter-owner himself, who congratulated us on our rapid journey, he calculating that we had made the trip two hours quicker than was ordinarily done. Hearing this, the guide and I looked upon each other with much approval. There was admiration also in the eyes of the dairy maid, but not for me, the guide being the younger and more fit. They both beamed on me, however, when my crowns came in evidence, for six of them were due him for his companionship, and she, bright thing, knew very well that I had not the heart to refuse her a gratuity. She squeezed the guide into her tiny kitchen, where sat a couple of other men smoking. Me she led into a large room where there was a "peis" (fireplace) and a large table, with several doors opening into adjacent bedrooms. I was left here to dry out and compose myself as best I might. Upon entering, my eyes being more familar with the brighter light out of doors, could not readily adjust themselves to the gloom, smaller objects remaining, for a certain space of time, undefined. I had been vaguely aware of a formless heap before the "peis" during the first few moments, but the several impressions received immediately upon my entering had not allowed the centering of thought or attention upon any one thing in particular. But suddenly my attention

was drawn to the aforesaid heap, which with many contortions was now rapidly changing its outline. Nor did it settle back into its former folds; on the contrary, it lifted up one end, which rose higher and higher and finally resolved itself, fully straightened out and adjusted, into a very correct, tall, angular Englishman. The remainder of the heap also partook of form and much motion, becoming, when disentangled, three larking maidens, Viking girls in quest of mountain joy, all hailing from the capital. Their simultaneous rising was intended as a salute to the newcomer, and I no doubt took it as such. Nevertheless the apparition caused me to make a sudden dive into the nearest bedroom. I felt unequal to the demands of the occasion, considering my much-bedraggled state. In my solitary nook I quitted the faithful umbrella, and the dilapidated foot-gear, and washed my face and hands, this being, however, quite unnecessary, which, also, requires no explanation. But the towel worked wonders, as did the brush, and having meanwhile begged a pair of dry stockings and slippers from the friendly host, I was enabled to emerge tranquil, combed and restored, before the good company. They had by now settled on benches before the blaze, chattering incessantly, throwing pine-knots on the flames to enjoy the sparks and to dissipate the rain, which fell in a respectable shower through the wide, yawning chimney. There was a general scramble for the privilege of surrendering to me their respective places, but the pleasure of acceptance was spoiled, for I could fill only one. I ensconced myself in the midst of the gathering, and in this atmosphere of kindness, with a fire in front to soothe and dry the tortured limbs, my spirits revived, and calm content filled my soul.

While I had been occupied in brushing up, the number of guests had been augmented by the arrival of three bright-faced students, who had also been received into the cheerful circle about the peis. Soon there were more arrivals; this time it was two ladies, who were promtply ushered into the ring by the indefatigable host, they being made instantly welcome, and all vying with one another in being gracious and kind. They were Danish schoolma'ams out for a holiday, and were filled to the brim with enthusiasm, having hunted their own way in the wilds, where they met with adventures which they eagerly recounted. The conversation, which had hitherto been carried on chiefly in Norwegian; was now richly spiced with Danish. These two languages, closely related as they are, supplemented each other well. But when the solitary Englishman began to look yearningly from one to the other, as if desiring a better understanding, we took pity on him, and adopted his tongue as a common vehicle of expression. All could converse quite freely in his language, and thus, he remaining true to English habit and traditions, was spared the pain of acquiring any other.

Almost on the heels of the Danes appeared an elderly maiden with a youth in her train, captured on the march, and now made to act as her escort, both being headed in the same direction. There was no question of surrendering a place to her, for she immediately took one, allowing meanwhile her charge to shift for himself. She had taught school all her life, bringing her school-room atmosphere with her, cackling and bustling about as if all the world were her scholars to be benefited by her learning, precept and example. As soon as opportunity offered, the modest man of Leeds ventured

to tell us that he had been joined by his three lady companions while attempting to cross the Memuru glacier all alone that day. He had been roped in by them, they being touched by his loneliness, and they bade their guide tie the knot securely that they might serve him in a union of safety while crossing the treacherous places. They had let him loose when the danger was over, but, grown used to their company, he had remained a willing captive in their ranks till now.

I had been making silent query, for some little time, as to the characters I had fallen in with, and directly, as if in answer to it, a turn in the conversation informed me that I was brushing elbows with the son of a former chief justice who was, besides, a near relative of Ole Bull, and yes, even also Edvard Grieg. A voice issuing in sonorous accents from under a table in the corner of the room betrayed, through various shadings and intonations, the origin of its author, the genuine son of his father, a famous manager-actor, said to be a member of the French academy, etc. And the mother was known throughout the kingdom for her famous roles and impersonations. From his gloomy retreat this bright-witted scion of stock histrionic made sudden excursions on all fours across the floor to pick up handkerchiefs, rings and other objects dropped by the ladies, returning them with homely obeisance and an abjectly apologetical, sprawling attitude. His antics excited the heartiest merriment, increased, perhaps, by his name and student's cap. Some sought to discover the identity of the three graces who had the gentleman from England in tow; but it was not to be revealed to us, though a wild conjecture was hazarded that they might be princesses in disguise.

This being settled, enquiry circled about the representative of John Bull, with a suspicion that he also must be a prince of some kind; nothing lower in rank would suffice. But he was so lacking in humor as to let slip an avowal that he was only an officer in the bank of England, and we, being now used to the company of ultra-aristocrats, looked upon him somewhat condescendingly. Though he had no royal blood in his veins, he finally became as popular as any. Even the "Hawkeye hayseed" was made to feel that, rank or no rank, a "man's a man for a' that." We were just a crowd of grown-up children, accidentally thrown together, and careless of station, eager for wholesome play. And play we did.

Supper came first, and such a jolly repast has seldom been indulged in. The "feast of reason and the flow of soul" prolonged the ceremony. We had tea and eggs, bread and cheese, sardines and marmalade, and if there was more, I do not remember it; and "good digestion waited on appetite." Then followed various games and other diversions, the gray-bearded landlord taking part, until weariness put a stop to our merriment. We slept upon extremely hard beds with bearskins, sheepskins and goatskins over us. Such great husks of former life seem different from mere spreads of cotton or other flimsy stuff; they cannot be dissociated from their one-time occupants, nor are they without a seeming comradeship. Sleep overcame our tired bodies as soon as our heads touched the pillows; and though we had intended to be up early, it was seven o'clock before we could shake off our drowsiness.

We breakfasted more quietly than we had supped, our hilarity being tempered by sundry aches and pains

from the previous day's exertions. Spoons were thrown at any one who so forgot himself as to mar the serene morning calm by trying to be funny. But our appetites had not forsaken us, and when we left the table there was little left upon it. We had come like an invading army, feasting to our heart's content. Imagine our surprise, and actual dismay, upon learning that the modest host had scarce taxed us more than cost. He had been most happy to serve us, he said. If anyone had acted patronizingly in such a house, it could not but be most heartily repented when the parting came. True, we could, no doubt, have prevailed upon the good man to accept a more than generous tip, but human nature being generally so constituted as to be equally loth to part with unexpected gains as with the regular ones, we happened mostly to forget it. We could, besides, have smoothed out matters very prettily by hiring one of his guides standing in eager readiness to show us the way; but, alas, our sense of obligation was not quite acute enough to guide the hand purse-ward. It would also have been greatly to our advantage had we engaged one of these men, as will appear in the sequel.

CHAPTER VII

Hairbreadth Escapes

THE jolly, fearless students took it upon themselves to act as guides, and all the rest joined in, equally brave, looking upon possible perils with bland indifference. The American and his British "cousin" brought up the rear, conversing on general topics, but keeping meanwhile watchful eyes on the bold Norwegians who led the van. First one jolly student took the lead, and then, when he became perplexed and bewildered, a second succeeded him. For awhile all went swimmingly, though, for the life of me, I could not discern the least sign of a path where the student-guide so confidently led the way. On and on he went, and follow we must, an undulating human chain being dragged rather unwillingly along over a terrifically rugged course, and one we had long since begun to question. Again there was bewilderment and much wavering, and finally the third student assumed the leadership. But this was merely an experiment and soon came to an end, whereupon there ensued a general consultation, when it turned out that all were equally wise concerning the situation, the ladies included. With cliffs towering threateningly above us, and with deeps yawning below, we felt that we had been brought to a pretty pass indeed. But all took equal blame; no one said, "I told you so," or alluded to the guide left behind.

Our next move proved to be as ill-advised as the first. Each following his own bent, we were soon scat-

tered like sheep in the wilds, groping vaguely about among the horrors of stone and chasm, feeling for a path, or trying at least to get our bearings. The princesses were as intrepid as the rest and quite undismayed, rising splendidly to the occasion. Once, crawling out of a most uninviting hole, scared and thirsty, I came upon one of them sitting as cool as you please on a stone near a mountain brooklet, dipping her little tin cup into the crystal liquid, and refreshing herself as contentedly as if she had been sitting safe in her own bower at home. Seeing furrows of concern on my brow, she spoke lightly of our predicament and, offering me a drink, dispelled my gloom and restored my serenity of aspect.

Though rather widely scattered, we did maintain a certain common direction, falling into groups and pleasantly chatting as we proceeded. Such chance conversations were very enjoyable. Especially do I remember of falling in with the mild-mannered cousin of Grieg, who entertained me with delightful anecdotes gleaned from much personal association with this gentle genius. I was so interested that I could have continued the discourse indefinitely, forgetful of the surroundings; but a misstep sent my companion sprawling, and the subject was promptly shelved for the day. He arose with a bleeding finger and no little surprise; but the hurt was slight, being quickly hidden with a bandage and forgotten with a laugh.

Our wanderings had led us to the edge of an irregularly sloping glacier, on which some faint tracks were discernible. Trusting ourselves on the ice, we presently, and with much unanimity and suddenness, assumed a sitting posture, though I myself managed to retain something of my foothold. But I gained nothing thereby,

Drawing by E. Biorn.

On the glacier.

as I was soon sliding down that awful slope toward a probable abyss at its foot. With my dignity to preserve, and a borrowed camera clutched in my left hand, I manipulated the life-saving umbrella in my right to such effect that it broke from a stab I made into a cleft in the ice, but which, luckily, arrested my unwilling course, promising safety for a second or two. All my blood seemed to rush to my head and every hair was straining to remove my hat. My mind was a blank and my eyes staring with apprehension. While in this situation, my comrades, almost equally helpless, called to me: "Take off your rubbers!" This advice I very meekly followed. With the aid of my partly-wrecked umbrella, and rid of the treacherous rubbers, but clinging to the camera, I managed to work my way back to the others, where I was supplied with a stick nobly tendered by one of the party who, in place of the surrendered implement, took my umbrella, he being the better shod.

The Englishman was holding on for dear life to his favorite princess, whom he had saved from despair by raising to her feet and holding her upright by a firm grasp of the hand, meantime steadying himself securely by leaning heavily on his iron-tipped staff. On passing me, his lady in charge gripped my hand heartily and helpfully, offering to hold on, but this only upset my painfully acquired equilibrium, and I was obliged, much against my will to cry out that she was disturbing my balance, and to ask her to let go immediately, lest I fall.

The crossing proved not so serious as we had feared, for all we had to do when we felt ourselves going was to drop into a sitting posture and the added surface thus presented by our bodies to the glacier hin-

dered our sliding. We edged warily, inch by inch, over the dreary, furrowed zone, but despite our caution, there were many ludicrous antics unwillingly performed, and many remarkable poses assumed. We enjoyed nearly a mile of this distracting, torturing pilgrimage, and when finally across looked around in panting dismay like fear-stricken horses craning back their necks to regard with wide-eyed concern a danger barely escaped.

The passage safely accomplished, we did not tarry, nor did the outlook bring cheer, but, descrying a path, we followed it doggedly, and, spying a cairn, we knew at last, that we had won. With more of these rude signs on the way we could have been spared much difficulty in making our advance. Lives have been lost in the wilds for the lack of these easily erected, silent, but trustworthy, guides.

With an eye on this cairn we searched till there appeared another, and then another, and so continuing we stuck unerringly to the course which they marked, until at last we found ourselves under Galdhøpiggen's very nose. The "Juvas-hut" was built on a level stretch of ground here, two hours' distance from the very crown of Norway's highest mountain, to provide entertainment for tourists and weary stragglers such as we.

The daughter of the famous mountain guide, Knut Vole, the proprietor, received us at the door and bade us welcome, assigning to all their respective rooms and sleeping places. We bunked in close proximity to one another, for the room was sorely limited and all the guests must needs be housed. The ladies were secluded aloft, and whether they had greater comfort and convenience than we, it behooves us not to know. They were conducted to their separate sleeping alcoves by

means of a rude stairway raised aloft outside and communicating by a common outer door with the nests within. Having fixed up a bit — those from above appeared as transfigured — all met below in the vast common room which served as guest and living room, dining and smoking room. Since we had come too late for dinner and too early for supper, both were combined in a generous meal partaking of the nature of each.

Drawing by E. Biorn.
Juvas-hut.

Safely housed and somewhat rested, secure in our places before a festal board, we felt that we could afford to assume indifference and prate of our foolish achievement before the assembled guests. But to our recital elicited no responsive smile. Knut Vole had lived too long and seen too much of mountaineering to look lightly on such an escapade. He warned us never again to repeat it, for another such reckless excursion might prove to be our last. Others had furnished warning examples. Being not unwilling to change the subject, we attacked the wholesome viands with appetites unaffected by the perils we had escaped, and our host smiled upon us again. Old Knut took every one to his bosom, without partiality, making one and all feel that they had indeed found a haven of refuge in this eerie spot on the very outskirts of the habitable world.

Though it was yet midsummer, the sighing night wind blew cold without, penetrating unseen crevices between the stout logs of the crudely built dwelling. There was a stove, but the fire flickered rather low, wood not being any too plentiful and only with great difficulty transported to these high altitudes, as had been also the material for the hut. There was no road for wheeled vehicles, and all the necessary provisions and camp paraphernalia were borne hither on horse-back, or shouldered by guides or others. No horses or cows were kept, and save in this one lone human habitation there was no life visible. All was silence except for the warring winds and the reverberating boom of cracking glaciers. Near the hut is a lake, ice-bound except when the warmth of summer breaks its bonds and sends the huge crystal cakes from a neighboring glacier plunging into its bosom.

While night and darkness prevailed without, a well burnished lamp shed a cheery luster within our four-cornered cage, inviting us to be merry. We took to imitating the songs of birds and the cries of various animals. A professor from Holland roared like a lion, frightening the owls, cats, dogs and monkeys into fearful silence. The American eagle ceased screaming and fluttered silently into a corner, while the Norwegian bear, shamed in his whining, drew tremblingly into a sitting posture behind the stove. John Bull's frenzied bellowing died into a moan as he sought refuge behind his princess, who sat silent like an awe-stricken bird. The roaring ended in long-drawn guttural growls, upon which gay shouts of laughter and loud acclaim burst forth, making the very rafters ring. The Hollander, no longer a lion, sat wreathed in smiles. A German doctor nearly com-

mitted murder on a musical classic loved by us all, perpetrating this crime by means of a cracked old violin, which he had fished out of a nook in the wall. Two ladies resuscitated the theme in song, silencing the horrid fiddle and thus saving the day. By unanimous consent and combined effort, the Britisher was dragged forth from his retreat to lead in the song known as "The Three Blind Mice." The sixteen travelers present joined in with all the force of their lungs. The conductor bawled forth as with a voice of ten, setting fair example, and wielded his baton (poker) in an agony of contortion, with danger to all. If the sleeping hills remained yet unmoved, the fault was not ours, for to disturb them we had indeed done our very best.

My window revealed the shadowy spectre of the mighty summit clothed as with a shroud, which reached out as I dozed away, hovering over me as a nightmare through the hours of miserable, troubled sleep. I arose unrefreshed to prepare for our great climb, but as the sun remained hidden, the fog budging not the slightest, we were pleased to postpone our journey till another day. We shook off our disappointment, made merry again, and in the joy of living I forgot the listlessness and soul-weariness induced by my ugly dream phantasy and unsound sleep. We sang and played the livelong day, only I must not forget to record our great slide, with our own Knut acting as master of ceremonies.

CHAPTER VIII

Mountain Sport and a Great Climb

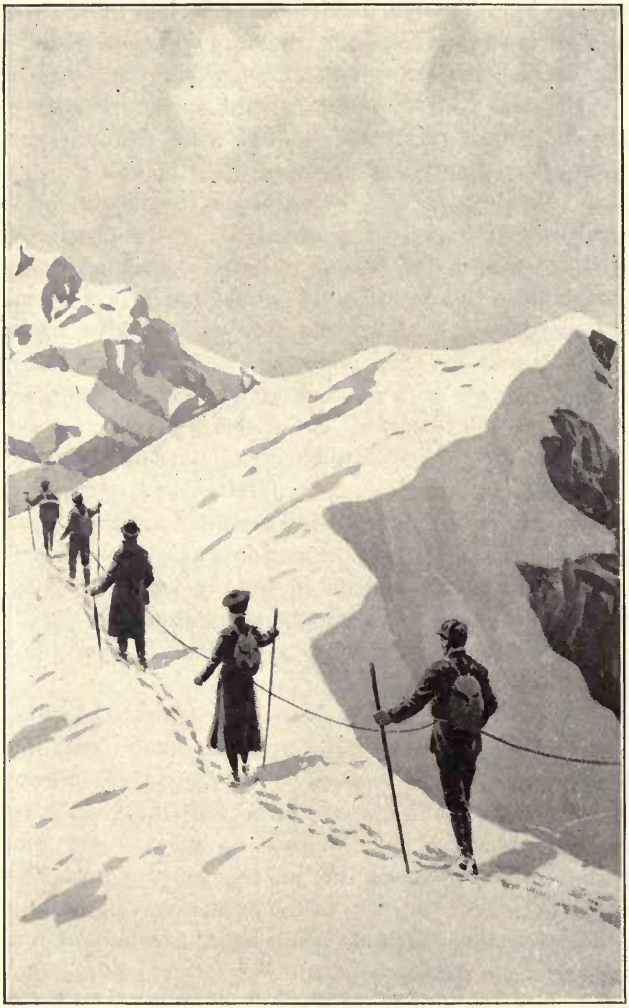
TO pass time and provide amusement during such awkward waits our host had caused several sleds to be transported from below, which he now brought forward for the use of those pleasurably inclined. We followed at his heels in a body, for all wished to share in this excellent sport. Seeking out one of the smoothest drifts and climbing up its immaculate bosom for the best part of a mile, Knut bade me sit astride his "Boomerang," and under his experienced guidance I was given my first meteor-like glide in the fields of perpetual snow. Later I was invited to be one of several on a sled steered by a less experienced man, with the result that we capsized, and skirts and coat-tails, boots and shoes, hands and feet were indiscriminately mingled. Some bumped noses, some rolled over and over, while others slid, rocket-like, alarmingly far, playing sad havoc with their clothing and getting a few smart bumps. But as long as no one was seriously hurt, no one cared, and though many looked considerably rumpled, all decided that it had been glorious fun, and forthwith voted Knut their best and warmest thanks.

The fun-makers' convention took up its deliberations immediately after supper, but broke up earlier than on the preceding evening, for there was that in the air denoting hunger for change. The second night was short and dreamless, and all were up, figuratively speaking, with the lark, to watch for sunbeams and an un-

clouded sky. Though it might have looked more promising, the prospect was not discouraging, and Knut finally decided that we might attempt the great climb.

All were told to make careful preparations, especially as to foot-gear. My rubbers were promptly ruled out, and as I had no other shoes than the calf-skin pair I was wearing, they were suffered to remain, and I quickly made ready. I yearned for my umbrella but dared not take it for fear of the sneers of these judges of costume. But my ulster I would have, even though kind-hearted Knut looked me over with a half-scornful, pitying expression in his eyes. With camera in one hand and a rude stick in the other, I shuffled along with the rest, as light-hearted and cheerful as they, though admittedly, not quite up to their standard in the matter of clothes. Although each had felt called upon to remark upon the correctness of my outfit, I suffered it with easy patience, discerning the real kindness beneath it all. Some were actually concerned for my welfare. Others frankly confessed they thought me courageous for disdaining to turn back because of a trifle, in view of the great things at stake.

Arrived at the treacherous drifts about the summit, Knut tied us together with a rope, to hinder individual gliding or sliding, or possible disappearances through bottomless clefts. We were told to walk singly, at a certain distance from one another, to prevent too much strain on any portion of the line in case of a drop. But he was not obeyed in this, in the least, the rope dropping slack and coming taut only when Knut scowled anxiously backwards over the truant row. Each one felt immune from a fall, for no danger seemed imminent, and human nature asserted itself, careless as ever, scouting caution



Drawing by E. Biorn.

In the heights.

when all went so well. But when somebody's foot found no bottom and the body came tumbling after, there was a scramble for places, and henceforth Knut's advice was better heeded.

Without warning, our guide woke the echoes with an ear-piercing cry. We stood stock-still in our tracks, listening in awed wonder to the commotion of sound thus set raging between the peaks. When Knut shouted "Denmark," with all the power of his lungs, it was quickly repeated quite correctly, coming back more tardily after a while and in fainter accents, and finally becoming almost inaudible, as if re-echoed from a vast distance. When all shouted together the pandemonium let loose was so great that I feared for the stability of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's features, especially the nose, which Nature had pictured in a frowning rock formation on our left.

Our path did not always lead over comfortable beds of snow, but at times over stone piles and slippery ice-crusts, and finally up a towering ridge with a thin shoulder resembling a razor-backed hog. We had to cut notches in its very spine to gain foothold, and as ice had formed here, danger lurked at every step. The wind blew fiercely, threatening to lift us off our feet, and though the ulster was some protection, it did not lessen its impact, and I seemed in danger of sailing off into space, with a generous following in train. The ice-hewn steps stood rather far apart, and in striving to attain them we had to hitch carefully along, respectful of one another's motions, like Siamese twins several times multiplied. I was in a state of much concern lest by some awkward mischance I should fall, thus possibly precipitating the whole string to headlong destruction. We

pushed rocks, unfeelingly, into chasms below, trying thus to gauge the depths, and listening intently to the cruel sounds proclaiming them shattered to the core. For fear of taking similar plunges ourselves we became extra cautious, nor did we further disturb the peace of the silent stones.

Having ascended the furrowed neck of the razor-back we soon found ourselves entering upon the up-turned snout constituting the top, and forthwith was let loose a most unmusical volley of sounds intended as cheers. We quickly shed our harness and each made haste to be the first to plant foot on the very pinnacle. Right here Knut had erected a rude shelter of boards, borne thither on his back through a period of strenuous effort lasting for weeks. To our horror we became enveloped in a cloud, and to provide cheer for such a contingency our host had brought up a tiny little stove, in which flames were soon dancing merrily, and the delicious aroma of boiling coffee came temptingly to tickle our fog-dampened noses. We stuck our cards into the walls and ceiling where there were thousands before, all new-comers wishing thus to perpetuate the fame of their having attained the highest spot in northern Europe. Huddled upon low benches set close to the wall, all had seats, and though we sat exceedingly close, the discomfort was minded by none, weightier matters by far claiming our attention. Knut was preparing to serve coffee! We waited each for our share with burning impatience, the novelty of the situation having completely upset our poise. All that mattered just then was that we by no manner of chance should allow ourselves to be overlooked in the distribution of cups. A few minutes before, such indulgence had not entered our thought, but,

once given the hint, existence seemed dreary without it. We burned our lips and scalded our tongues with the fiery black stuff, but having got what we wanted, no one cried out. Knut sat in our midst, ladling out the precious drops in smoking portions right and left, thus becoming enveloped in a mantle of steam which set off his figure in fine fashion. Seeing him thus picturesquely ensconced, it occured to one brighter than the rest to beg for a tale of the mountains. This reminded some of what they had long wanted to hear, viz: The Story of His Great Adventure. He would have fled, but being completely circled about, he realized the futility of the attempt. Reinforced by his pipe and the cheerful little blaze, he beamed benevolently about, and the whole group and its surroundings presented a scene not soon to be forgotten.

"I was alone with a very green tourist one day in these wilds," he began, "when there happened what for a time I thought surely would end all my trips, here and elsewhere, forever. We had roped ourselves together safely enough, but as if fated for trouble I had let caution take wings, forgetting to be watchful of the person I had in my charge. For two to walk with a slack rope among these tricky crevices, so carefully covered, is to court danger with a vengeance; with my attention called elsewhere, I had not noticed that my companion, contrary to instructions, hung hard on my heels, dragging the loop in the snow. Of a sudden the crust gave way beneath me and an awful black abyss opened and swallowed me up. I had nothing to do but fall, which I did; but luckily for me and the green-horn above, my feet instinctively casting about, struck a ledge about twenty feet down. This arrested my progress, saving me also

from dragging down my companion, who, if he had but kept to his place, would have been secure, at the same time providing a stay for me. Being still in the possession of my wits, I clung where I had landed, thankful for this much, at least. But the ledge was so narrow I could scarce keep my balance; and imagine my horror when the blockhead above took to pulling and jerking, threatening to tear me off my perch. Had he succeeded in this, we would both have been plunged headlong into a bottomless cleft. Failing in his well-meant but foolish effort to dislodge me and so spill his own life as well as mine, he desisted, and the rope growing slack indicated his departure in quest of aid. Being now rid of the greatest danger, I examined my situation as carefully as I could. As scarcely any light penetrated from above, I was obliged to grope about me with my hands to discover, if possible, some means of escape from my fearful dilemma. I found there was ice in plenty to support my weight, could I but gain foothold; but there were no other accommodating ledges, and I soon saw that to escape there was no royal road open, and that I must make one. At this juncture I remembered the ice-axe strapped to my back, and I tingled all over with joy at the thought of possible deliverance. I quickly began to chop steps in the ice, but found it exceedingly slow work and fearfully dangerous, on account of my cramped position and frequent slipping. Because of the shower of fine particles of ice I was sometimes on the point of losing hold of my axe-handle, when my heart would almost stop beating in fearful apprehension of results, should I drop it. After several hours of steady chopping, I had ascended into the light, but when congratulating myself at last on assured safety and

speedy relief, there occurred the most awful mischance of all; a huge cake of solid snow from above, becoming loosened, plunged down upon me. It gripped me in an embrace as of death, but by a miracle my head crashed through, though it pinioned my body so close to the icy wall in brushing past that it knocked all the breath out of it, leaving me swaying in a dizzy half-stupor and on the verge of falling. But my end had not come. I recovered my breath and ceased to see stars. How glorious it was again to be able to breathe, and to see! How thankful I was that I had not lost my balance! To describe my happiness when at last I climbed out is beyond me. Words are not for such uses. Let each one imagine it. Thanks to my good health I quickly recovered from the shock, found my way home quite alone, no rescuers coming to my aid, and slept quietly and undisturbedly that night as always before."

"The summit is clear," some one sang out, and immediately there issued forth an eager, curious throng, and silence reigned supreme in the hut. The old sun of Noah, brightly smiling as ever, came back to its haunts today as of yore, pushing the clouds playfully apart, lovingly showering its gold on the crown of the venerable mount, which, glistening back, spoke of mutual endearments, ancient of origin, harking back to times before the flood. We felt ourselves uncomfortably new, quite excruciatingly up to date.

Was the view worth half a crown as an investment? It had cost us more than that. Who can figure out the value of esthetical raptures by mathematical rule? Perhaps our guide could, but to me it appeared that life's highest rewards have no intrinsic value, and that all our material strivings are but means to an end. We had

"Glitterlind," Jotunheim Mts. Mountain glory. *Drawing by E. Biorn.*

now arrived, as it were, at a finish. As with music, for example, and the pure and noble in art, here was a glimpse as of heaven, a foretaste of the beyond. Was it worth while? The rapt features of my companions, all joyfully tense as if in earnest worship, as well as the rapturous promptings of my own soul, answered loudly, Yes. The view was wide and wonderfully varied, and — the scene of such sublimity that I herewith promise not to try to describe it, and will say in the language of Knut Vole, "Words are not for such uses." Let those hungering for soul exaltation seek out such spots for themselves; the messages received here are private, untranslatable, and not deliverable through carriers or interpreters.

As I turned away from the glorious scene, there came to my mind that beautiful psalm of Brorson, made famous by Grieg:

> "Behold the mighty white array,
> Like snow clad mountains far away."

CHAPTER IX

Astray in the Mountains

ALMOST any agreeable experience ends, finally, with more or less of disillusionment. After the rapture of the moment is over, and our exaltation has subsided, we grope around in whimsical helplessness, feeling rather forlorn and undone. Though we have become saner, we feel emptier, and sorry we've grown so wise. We would rather go back, but the reaction has come and we must remain satisfied with mere every-day thoughts and thrills. Our very philosophy appears to have undergone a change, but whether we actually have clearer vision in this sober second state than in the other, is an open question, for it soon passes, while the glory of the first experience always remains with us.

Ugh! we hated to put on the old harness again and traverse that same horrid path of which we had had so entirely enough, even though it did look interesting once. Had it only been something new! But no; Knut had no other road laid out, and he brusquely bade us come, seemingly unaware of our slackened zeal and our depressed spirits. And we came, and very promptly too; for, before we were well aware of it, we were sailing on our backs down a steep incline overlaid with soft snow, finding ourselves suddenly transferred to the base all out of kelter, and quite terribly shocked, but nevertheless still linked together and unhurt.

There was a thunderstorm of objurgations imminent, but Knut's broad smile dissipated it, his cheeriness com-

municating itself gradually also to the many frigid countenances surrounding him, all most determinedly prepared for anything but a thaw. But we all burst out in a roar of laughter in spite of ourselves, and this being the most effective of all modes of mirth, instantly our spirits rose to par again. Knut, the old fox, had divined our predicament and, having had much experience, knew how to rally drooping spirits, though adopting rather heroic measures in accomplishing his design. There was much chatter, Knut beamed upon us like a sun, and before another hour had passed we viewed again the Juvas hut; and lo! sleds lay at our feet as if charmed there, inviting us to settle upon their backs and slide the best part of the remaining distance, gravitation propelling us downwards in the exact direction it pleased us to point.

We mortals seem to be so constituted that we must continually have something pleasant to look forward to, otherwise existence were but a sorry boon. No sooner had the flurry from the unexpected slide subsided ere our busy minds prodded us into anxiety as to the next likeliest good thing making ready for our pleasure. Some one suggested that it might be dinner. It was. The mere thought of it made us crave for it so fervently that upon coming into actual possession it seemed too good to be true and more than one reminded himself of Banquo's feast, half expecting some giant Jotul to appear to snatch away the precious portions from beneath our very noses. The rare, peculiar surroundings, confused the senses, causing them to grope rather helplessly about, undetermined as to the real and unreal. But with something solid between our teeth, "flad-bröd," (flat-bread) for instance, hallucinations and all their brood and kindred took flight, leaving us serene, sane and satisfied. Nothing

like a large, wholesome Norwegian meal to restore disturbed functions; — but there are diverse ways of indulging. One strong, healthy youth, chaperoned by a doting mother, devoured a dozen fishballs!

When one is not rich and is blessed with an insatiable desire for travel, he sometimes secretly sighs for a respite from his appetite-ridden stomach; and though knowing it a wrong desire he is tempted to wish he could dispense with and forget that organ till he gets past all hotels and back to the land, where he may bake his own bread and fry his own fish witout paying a high premium for every ounce swallowed. Knut was not unreasonable, however, and though our wallets were not inconsiderably lightened our spirits had risen in similar degree, enabling us to fare forth joyous and happy, as we had come.

To part with good companions is always a wrench; and to me it is often real pain. Never again, I feared, should I meet the jolly students, the Danes, the Hollander, the German, the good Englishman, the lady and her son, that fine schoolmaster and his wife, the princesses — but I anticipate. The princesses happened to take my particular road, Elvesäter being my destination; thither they were also bound. We made for it without a guide, my fair companions feeling, no doubt, greatly reassured by a certain masculine presence; but he of the presence, viz., myself, had less assurance, being in reality, far more dependent on their company than they on mine. I had grown up midst the cornfields; they among the hills; then why should they not be the more fit to take the lead?

I walked on very boldly in advance, for awhile, but soon grew undecided as to which way to go. There were different opinions between us regarding the route. After

some hesitation I again plunged ahead; meanwhile the princesses sat down on a stone to rest. Imagine my consternation upon seeing them, when well beyond shouting distance, scrambling to their feet and tripping blithely off in a direction of their own. I feared I had seen the last of the princesses. They did not so much as wave a handkerchief, and I turned with much concern and loneliness to pick a path of my own. I had let myself loose on the slopes of Galdhøpiggen, Norway's highest mountain, and nobody objected or cared.

I was so pre-occupied with the unexpected turn of events that I stumbled, unwittingly, quite out of my course and found myself facing — a view so sublimely grand that nothing mattered else than to garner it quickly, as best I might into the inmost reaches of soul and inner vision, there to be imprinted and retained for ever. One particular mount had a cloud wrapped around its summit, and when the hoary-headed top showed through, the shifting kaledioscopic effect suggested the form of a lithe, furry cat twisting itself affectionately around the furrowed neck of some old grandpa or grandma. At times there seemed to be hesitancy, and again surprisingly quick motion, precisely as when young puss strokes an ear, dashes at a stray hair or comports herself over-audaciously in a fine frenzy of feline foolishness. At times it would resolve itself into a mighty serpent coiling sinuously above the shoulders of its mistress, hiding its huge head in her billowy masses of hair and running its forked tongue out threateningly when the freakish wind disturbed the flowing tresses, its pillow. When comparatively near such vapor-caps, or mountain-scarfs, they look awe-inspiring and even terrifying, and one's first impulse is to turn about and take

inglorious flight. They reach out noiselessly and fast and speak with the voiceless, dreadful accent of the iceberg: — "I shall get you any way, no use to fly."

In the mountains I saw distant deeps or depressions which the sun had scarcely ever looked upon; and between their walls roared cataracts, showing white, their shifting substance remaining stationary, seemingly, to the eye. The mountains rose brown and irregular, and appeared bare save for some crouching objects here and there which I took to be stunted growths, or queer-shaped boulders. Some dark shapes flitted instantaneously up and down their sides, and gazing aloft I beheld their very antithesis in brilliant bits of vapor veiling the sun and looking no more real than their unsubstantial shadows. I could just get a glimpse of a distant valley where there were human habitations, but it appeared so diminutive that I should have scorned to acknowledge such a crevice for my home, and imagined, or made believe, that I was brother to the big hills and waterfalls and somewhat similar in stature, strength and aspect. But the illusion vanished when I essayed to step across a miniature chasm; and though still literally among clouds I dropped away from them very quickly, as it were, when the cruel truth came back to me, reminding me that I was but an atom and a lost one at that.

While I stood thus bewildered, I suddenly remembered that I had been brought up on the prairie, and called to mind the Indians I had so often seen. I bethought myself of their lore, and gradually there crept upon me great assurance, wariness and cunning. It was a brave's telepathic call, no doubt, to his adopted brother groping about in distress amid strange surroundings, far

away from the plains and corn-fields. I had been told that there remained signs of an old path somewhere, and this I now confidently set out to find.

By looking too intently at a distant object it becomes elusive and finally disappears, but by letting the eye rove carelessly around in its vicinity it is made to appear, being caught unawares through a casual glimpse. Thus I came upon the path and, faint though it was, its course could still be traced by a wary eye. Sometimes I would step upon the smoothed face of a rock showing evidence of the friction of other feet; but the new grass or fresh layer of moss had a trick of spiriting my path away, and I repeatedly found myself bewildered and lost. Although I had acquired the general sense of direction it helped me little, for there were mighty boulders to avoid, ravines to climb out of, bogs to shun, chasms to beware of, and other similar obstructions, so that by the time I recovered my general direction and could make use of the old landmarks, I had shown equal favor to all the thirty-two points of the compass. Eventually I suppose this would have landed me at my hotel, say in a fortnight or so, but as this was not soon enough, I trusted to my Indian-like sagacity, now rapidly developing, in ferreting out the disappearing track. How utterly selfish of those who had gone in advance, I thought, not to throw out some reminder as to the way of their going. I reckoned up their shortcomings, but overlooked my own, which were precisely similar to theirs, I being only concerned for myself, and never having once thought of my successors in distress till now when I write. I would have subscribed liberally to a signpost fund on that day of my dire need, but the next would have found me rather unresponsive to any such call upon my purse.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." How aptly may we not misapply truths when selfishly minded.

Thanks to remnants of a sign-post or two, a few scraps of paper here and there, and now and then a solitary heel-mark or a broken twig, but mainly through intuition or instinct, or better, luck, I managed to make no inconsiderable headway and finally stumbled into the precincts of a mountain saeter sleepily ensconced on a sun-kissed hillside and baring its nourishing bosom of herbs and greens to a hundred eager, feeding mouths. There were cows and sheep and goats.

In my joy I thought to look around, and could discern in the dim distance three figures, resembling human beings, busily rummaging around among the peaks as if in quest of a way. It made me happy to think that they were possibly in a dilemma, but, manfully and without rancor, I waved my umbrella at them, though of course I failed to attract their attention. "Each one for himself" seemed to be the slogan in these parts; so I took my eyes off them and left them to their pleasure, being more immediately concerned with a consuming and ever-increasing thirst that now demanded to be quenched. At sight of the saeter there came visions of buttermilk, sour milk, sweet milk and of that odoriferous liquid brought forth from the goat. It seemed like a dream, too good to come true, but I made haste to realize it, entering the door of the hut quickly and without ceremony, not even so much as knocking; for that, I had learned, was not customary. I had expected the door to open into silence and emptiness, but found two saeter girls inside puzzling over a separator and making cream, butter and cheese. They were not a bit bashful, nor were they surprised, but took me into their confidence at once, telling

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

Milking the goat.

me about their families and whatever else they thought it worth while for me to know. They filled me with milk and would have added coffee, but to this I made strenuous objection, feeling that it would be so very unnecessary. They showed me the shelves of cheese, boiling vats, and the many other things they had; and once, while I was busy nibbling a piece of their primest product, "gjede ost" (goat cheese), one of them slyly slipped on a brand new skirt, and this quite especially for my benefit; she wanted to look her nicest before the stranger. I was so touched by their guilelessness and goodness of heart that I stayed to tell them as much as they wished to know about America, that country of wealth, that dream of delight, that place whither they so eagerly desired to go, and whither their brothers and cousins and friends had gone before. They were bold as fawns, trusting as lambs and quite unconscious of self. There wasn't a doubt in their minds but that this chance stranger was the incarnation of all things worth knowing, with goodness and sincerity thrown in for good measure. How easily we may ingratiate ourselves with the lowly! How beautiful and how complete is their regard! Ingrate he who would in ignoble manner in any way betray or disillusionize them.

They accompanied me far on my way and told me all about the pathway, down to the veriest details, which I of course promptly forgot, as all directions so generously vouchsafed are apt to be forgotten. Although there was actually something of a path I had the greatest difficulty in following its traces. It skipped over stones and got itself lost in little brook-beds, meandering slyly through seemingly unbroken heather and escaping from pursuit under great blankets of pine needles. Meeting

with trees, I dodged uncertainly in and out among them as if chasing butterflies or sunbeams, being in reality but occupied with my quest of the wily pathway. Certain kinds of moss lying in wait decoyed it into the very woof of its velvety body-covering, hiding it there and giving no outward sign of what it had so cunningly concealed. But by casting my eye beyond the little mossbeds I discovered the trick and, walking (tracklessly) to the opposite side, found the place where the subdued footprints weakly emerged.

Having finally descended well into the wooded tracts the road widened, having gained more assurance, as it were, through much familiarity with frequenters in quest of feed and fuel. I had no difficulty in following its windings after this; in fact, it was so very much in evidence and so tortuous that I wished there had been much less of it and that it would pursue a less zigzag course; but it continued along the old original line of least resistance, as first laid out, distance not having been considered. I grew so tired of this awkward twisting and turning that I threatened to leave it and go straight across, but after trying this short-cut for just one minute, I scrambled back very glad that I had sustained no broken back or met with any other unhappy experience. Perhaps it was an old cow that had wandered hither first, her instinct telling her that it was wiser to cover the incline in many gradual turns than to risk sliding on her haunches down a straight, steep course. There were, however, places she should have walked around instead of across; for where is the philosophy in climbing over a given eminence when the distance is the same either way around. Of old, such useless climbing was invariably indulged in till an old "bonde" (peasant) illustrated the

folly of it by asking which was the easier way for a worm to crawl, along a kettle-handle standing up, or lying down? The hint was taken, for modern roads climb no more hills than is necessary; they stroll around them. But the cow of by-gone days had not known this, and since then her apathetic string of followers have never roused themselves sufficiently to locate a better course. And I must needs follow in their proper footsteps! I got glimpses of the location of my hotel many a time, and though I did not dare undertake to deny that it was real, it was like following a Will o' the Wisp. To pass the time I kept on asking and answering the following questions or conundrums: — Which is more elusive, a mountain top or a valley equi-distant from a given point? Ans. Both. Which is hardest to attain? Ans. Either one is worse than the other.

The last stretch seemed the longest, and I quite lost my patience. The nearer I came to the object of my desire the more eagerly I longed to attain it. I would have annihilated the distance at a bound, but my weary limbs held me back, so that I was glad enough to halt and lean over a fence for a little rest, making enquiry, meanwhile, as to the whereabouts of my hostelry.

My question was addressed to a kind-looking woman on the opposite side of the fence, who hurriedly advanced to make respectful answer and be of service. Things are so very peculiar in this world: I pay a stiff price for my room, but for the privilege of knowing where to find it, which is a first consideration and supremely important, I pay the informant merely with a nod of thanks. Nevertheless, it is not always what we actually pay for that we prize the most highly. The direction was hers to give and no more, but there was a wealth of willingness behind it. I grew curious about

her and stopped for a short chat. She was a poor enough creature but she did not appear dissatisfied; her look was serene. Her dress was of homespun and coarse in very truth. The rather tight-fitting red waist did not quite make connection with the short skirt which hung precariously dependent on but one visible means of support, viz., a large, white button perched conspicuously somewhere about her back. The skirt being so scant, the ankles stood high and dry, rising from well-stockinged feet set in the spacious troughs of a pair of wooden shoes beneath. She was making hay alone; also, she was quite alone in the world, being an old maid of some sixty summers. Since the dear mother died she had experienced much of struggle and loneliness. Yet her home was inexpressibly dear to her, the few belongings being doubly dear from a beloved mother's touch. Her tiny room was her sanctuary. Her things were always kept strictly where her own hand had put them. Hers was the very atmosphere that greeted her comings and goings. Children excepted, her callers were none. With a tear-stained tot on her knee God saw her as His noblest work. Her prayerful fondling of some mother's child, her bestowal of such unselffish love, placed her little lower than the angels; and therefore God loves her and her like a little better, perhaps, than mere mothers or other ordinary beings.

Having now gained the highway, I found walking less difficult; in fact, the road was so smooth that I paid but slight attention to my feet, allowing them a great measure of freedom and giving them a sort of half-holiday after their recent activities on the heights. It was a delight to me to step along so carelessly, free from concern of any kind, enabling me to enjoy to the full the beauties of field and roadside.

CHAPTER X

A Road with an Abrupt Ending

THE hotel proved to be all a tired man could desire, giving me privacy in a clean room, a well spread table, pretty surroundings, and a friendly host. He was building another hotel to accomodate future guests but this did not hinder him from entertaining the ones he had. It is in these country hotels that one sometimes meets the twice-talkative guest. What you or I know he soon appropriates, and what he knows nobody can escape from. For supper we were treated to the most delicious, accommodating fish which had flopped right out of the river, and had lived to see its own frying-pan.

During the evening I sat in the arbor and looked and listened to my heart's content. The mountain scenery provided rich inspiration, and the music from the near-by river sang a symphony of sound into my soul.

It is pleasant communing with nature thus, but concern for the morrow bade me arise, enter the hotel and say good night to my kind friends — the princesses had come and were amiable to all — and seek in sleep the recuperation needed for another day's exertions. A raging mountain stream, the Bøver river, raced past my window, and its waters sang to me in ceaseless monotone all through the night. At first I was irritated, as the occupant of a sleeping-car is irritated by the incessant din of the moving train; but finally, becoming accus-

tomed to the novel lullaby, I was soothed into a state of drowsiness, and should have been painfuly startled by any sudden cessation of the river's unending refrain. Night sped by without its usual train of Hours, my sound sleep having, seemingly, for once, stolen a march on Father Time. The senses corroborated me in this, but not my watch, which had ticked all the seconds faithfully away while its owner was unconscious, and upon my waking indicated a rather late hour. I could have smashed it for being so correct, but got up mechanically.

As the roadway lay alongside the river it gave me an opportunity to watch the traps and pitfalls lying in wait in its bed as the unsuspecting water, forever fooled, dropped into cauldrons, swung into eddies or was pulled this way and that into frenzied currents or whirlpools. Liberated here, it hurried on only to slap its face, the next moment, against an unfeeling boulder grown green with age in this business. Though it was no doubt on the look-out against repetitions of such mishaps, it was not prepared on general principles, and, "once a fool, always a fool," it got caught by a new trick each time, though each fresh trick was but a slight modification of an old one. To my questioning mind the answer came that it was gravitation that caused most of the trouble, the poor water being goaded on, pulled and pushed to its punishment by an unseen ever-active force, over these horrors of stone and chasm, along a pathway none other must take. A sheer drop might have been preferable, but from this trying, tumultous ordeal it emerged clarified, purified, and fit for man and beast to drink. Gravitation laid also a detaining hand on my poor legs. I was walking uphill, against the stream, hence not entitled to a push or a lift. I would not ask the latter, but desired

earnestly that I might be let alone, left free to move with equal ease any way I pleased, be it up or down. This was not allowed me, however, and I trudged upwards, nursing, as always, a slight grudge against Nature when opposed by her inviolable laws.

Lifting my eyes from the struggling stream and casting them upwards, I suddenly opened them very wide; for there, rising sheer on the left, outlined against the deep blue of the heavens, was my mountain of yesterday, grand as ever, and fully as desirable as when I had it under me. It had grown even more beautiful in the distance, and the enchantment of the unattainable, so to speak, gripped me. It beckoned from between smaller eminences, seemingly at first glance as near as they, but grown awful upon further contemplation and full realization. Never did I enjoy my mountain as I did this morning, as it played hide-and-seek with me between the hills on my journey along the Bøver River.

The road continued good for several miles, and gave me no concern till it forked, when my branch developed a decided roughness. I had chosen a route little frequented by tourists, and told myself not to be unduly solicitous for the comfort of my feet. Having bobbed uncertainly up and down for some distance, and having started to chide myself for taking this road after all, I came up with a lone, solitary laborer who worked at the end of it. I learned that he alone had brought it thus far and he expected to continue it still further, no government aid being at his disposal to hasten the work. True, the community in which he lived in the valley below remembered him with a small stipend, otherwise he could not have kept at his task. I happened to come while he was still too young; he should have been at least fifty

years longer at work, when it would no doubt have proved to be a real pleasure to pass this way. To build a road single-handed in such territory takes much patience; it requires such perseverance as the ancients had, who in a lifetime were content to execute merely a part of certain vast works planned.

Our road-builder had laid aside his shovel long before I addressed him, glad of any pretext for a rest, but cheerful and willing to resume work when circumstances afforded him no plausible excuse for further delay. He scooped the loose rocks into the middle of the road-to-be, finishing it off with moss, peat and earth, on top. When it was possible he made ditches alongside it to carry away the water, and also to heighten the road effect. A number of shovelsful from either side, heaped in the middle, soon accomplished this purpose. He chose to follow the windings of the ascending valley as it climbed, against the stream, toward the fields of eternal snow. Like the government experts he avoided the very steep inclines which would have rendered his road useless, but laid it out so that the ascent was gradual and as regular as the general topography of the territory would allow. When I told him that one of the main difficulties in the way of the making of new roads in the great middle West was, not mountains nor ice-tracts, but indecision, some spots of mud and lots of red tape, he could only smile and look his feelings at the uncouth territory, impossible by comparison, that lay before us, daring him to subdue it.

My road thus ended, the laborer's little son volunteered to show me a path, one that had been made hundreds of years before for the traffic between Lom and Sogn. As he left I encountered a blackfaced saeter dog

that yelped defiance at me as I started to cross the territory over which he stood guard. I ignored him, stepping boldly into his domains, he meanwhile barking in tones of hottest hate; nor would be desist even after I had passed by and plainly shown him that I did not desire to carry away any of his mountains or other belongings. His rancor increased with the distance between us, and this no doubt because I had done no harm whatever, thus robbing him of an excuse for taking revenge and biting me. He had a colt, some sheep and a few

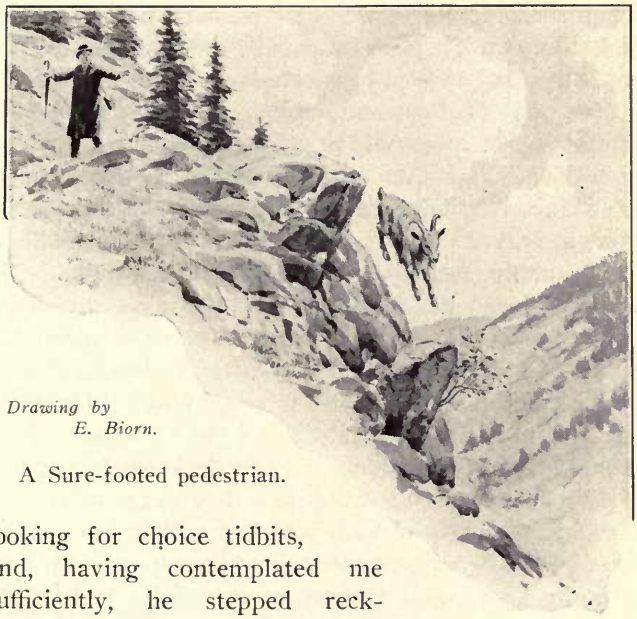
Drawing by E. Biorn.

A mountain saeter.

cows to account for. Dropping behind a jutting rock, I was at last freed from his clamour.

The scenery here had no particular pattern, being a jumble of brown, heathery stretches and rugged rock formations, with no distant view in any direction. It was now that I had the pleasure of meeting a goat, a sure-footed pedestrain, a solitary wayfarer, as was I myself. We met point blank, face to face, directly in the path, took stock of each other calmly and dispassionately, and offered no hindrance to each other as we

passed. I felt as if I had been looked through and through by those steady eyes, and glanced around to view the retreating figure, turning only to look square into the face of the uncanny thing. It evidently had not seen enough, nor had I; so we gazed our fill. He was



Drawing by E. Biorn.

A Sure-footed pedestrian.

looking for choice tidbits, and, having contemplated me sufficiently, he stepped recklessly aside, inviting the worst kind of a tumble; but he got the choice morsel he was after, and stood balanced securely enough, nonchalant as ever. While he munched it he stood out in the most exasperating position imaginable, squinting mischievously at me as if noting my concern and enjoying it. He then jumped, as I thought, to his destruction; but his feet struck just where he had aimed, and there he

hung without a tremor, reaching out for a coveted leaf and remaining as unconcerned as ever, seemingly immune from danger. When he made another mad leap I turned away and quickly resumed my journey, not wishing to be a witness to his self-destruction.

All this time — that is, since I left Galdhøpiggen — I had been "toting" a well-filled camera, holding it aloft gingerly in unsafe places, carefully guarding it from mishap, till nerves and muscles were all a-quiver with liveliest protest at the bothersome burden. To go empty-handed should be the motto of all mountain-climbers. An infinitesimal bundle even when carried on the back, though so seemingly slight, causes inconvenience enough. I came to regard that persistent pull on my hands with almost unholy feelings. But finally the handle broke, which relieved me of the weight for a second; but it didn't soothe the feelings any. With fear tugging at my heart I threw myself down, catching the camera-case by its leathern ear and getting it again within my grasp, but fearful as to the condition of the contents. Had I brought those plates thus far, with the utmost care, only to ruin them at last? Why had they not gone to their destruction sooner if such was to be their fate? I replaced the offending screw and walked on in dread uncertainty as to what manner of material I had by this time accumulated and developed in my black box dangling heavier than ever in the crook of my finger.

While in a rather depressed state of mind on account of my mishap, I came upon a natural bridge waiting to be crossed, where my curiosity was roused and at the same time my blues were dispelled. After clambering over the hump-backed bridge I climbed down among the rocks and drew as near the swishing stream as I

dared, noting with great glee the water as it danced and caroused through the fissures and yawning gaps between the rocky, crudely-set bridge supports. It was the water that had originally discovered its own way of egress here, being averse to rising and crossing at a higher level when an easier route was possible. It had pushed away the smaller obstructions and now brushed rather roughly through between the more obstinate barriers of stone still remaining to dispute its passage. I grew slightly uneasy as I stood there; things looked so altogether topsy-turvy and loosely hinged that I couldn't venture to forecast what might happen here next. There came over me a sense of the vast solitude encompassing me, though the hissing at my feet served as no inconsiderable distraction, yet far from reassuringly. I stood there awe-stricken, while all the gnomes and hob-goblins gathered about; but peeping furtively upwards, my eye met a shining drift, and the spell vanished; nature smiled and beckoned from many a nook, the sprites came out to dance, and all was well.

A little further on I passed a remarkable pile of stones; but whether it was fashioned by human hands or was the result of natural causes, can hardly be determined. It was a veritable freak, anyhow. A mass of sliced and scissored rock consisting of pieces of no great size had been dumped into a vast regular pile, acres in length, but narrow and symmetrical, and as high as a house. There were no similar rocks in the vicinity, but there was a swift-flowing river, and whether it had picked them up and how, or what forces had been at work, remains a problem.

I had been climbing gradually upward and did not realize the height attained till I saw myself on a level

with several scattered blankets of snow that had not been exposed to any but the oblique rays of the sun. These remained, many of them, in comparatively low altitudes, yet they were high and difficult enough to reach on the part of a mere pedestrian. Birds soaring over the valley and nearly lost to sight from below in the azure above, because of the seeming great height, appeared, when seen from my first snow drift (if detected at all), as if they were hovering about, ready to light on the first house-top.

The hotel came into view readily enough, in the midst of the valley, where no one could miss seeing it after coming thus far. But to reach it had been my main difficulty, for I had tramped till three o'clock before succeeding. I was frankly gazed upon by the inmates through the windows, and it made me feel very much like a bashful school-boy receiving a reprimand before his class. I was seized with self-consciousness and could not bear myself gracefully. There is so little variety in the scenery in this immediate region that any slight diversion, even though it be but the approach of a humble wayfarer like myself, is better than nothing to relieve the monotony. I managed to make my way toward the entrance somehow, though nearly put to rout by the many eye-missles darted at me as I drew near.

I was promptly escorted to the table, where I found myself quite alone, facing a stale dinner that had been in readiness for any comer, white or yellow, some two hours. Beside the inevitable prune, I do not remember clearly what was served, but it was sufficient, and rendered substantially the same service as any other ordinary meal would have done, come upon by chance in any one of a million different places.

In the parlor I found an old man smoking and reading most diligently. His whole attitude gave the impression that he was determined to make the very utmost of his vacation. He had dispensed with vacations till he had secured plenty of money and leisure, being sorry now, however, that he had waited so long, and trying his hardest to make up for lost time by cramming himself with a surfeit of enjoyment during the remaining years of his life.

CHAPTER XI

Onward to Krosboden

HAVING planned to reach Krosboden before nightfall, I bade good-bye to the strenuous vacationist, took my camera, and quietly slipped away just thirty-seven cents lighter of purse than when I came. What curious scrutiny followed me as I took my departure, I know not, as my eyes were wholly occupied in guiding my feet safely along the crooked path.

I was in no especial mood for sight-seeing as I plodded on, and as this particular valley had an awkward way of shutting off the adjacent scenery, I was spared from looking. To tell the truth I came to wish there were just a little less to see sometimes, especially after having been satiated, for the time being, with some glorious view that had sufficiently satisfied my esthetical longings. But being a born curiosity-seeker my enthusiasm soon came back and I was all afire again with eagerness to explore the unknown and unseen. My valley had an obstruction at the end of it, gagging its very mouth, as it were; for when I finally climbed over its peculiar back, which I had regarded in the distance for so long, there was no clearly defined valley to be seen any more. But I still had before me a depression; in fact, one seems nearly always to be wandering around in depressions in the mountains. The highest points remain but a stone's throw away, wherever you are, and they have a clever knack of eluding one, though just occasionally they may be caught and cornered.

The Krosboden hotel occupies a bleak site not far from the rim of a mighty drift, and well within the cloud region. I arrived there at eight o'clock and was promptly led to a room, but as quickly ousted by an occupant already installed and deaf to any claims I could put forward. I poured out my troubles to the lady manager, but she had plenty of her own, the place being overcrowded with guests. Evidently my advent had been but carelessly regarded. She admitted that I could not sleep outside, but suggested the floor. This was not what I had been looking forward to, but as there was no alternative, a lair was found for me in a corner, into which I had the privilege of creeping whenever I felt so inclined.

Before going to bed (?) I visited the parlor, which was full to overflowing, with not an easy chair left for me. I had been so much alone during the day that I refused to leave, promising to be good, offering to stand up. And if it hadn't been so cold I could have managed to enjoy myself a little. There was present a lady with a pure-air hobby who went to the most frigid extremes, and, with no heart whatever for her less warm blooded fellow beings, flung a window wide open for the icy air to sweep down from an adjacent glacier directly into our very laps and lungs. Having exercised so much during the day, I had but little vitality left to resist its chill, and fell to shivering under its influence. Highly displeased, I took occasion to impart to a fellow sufferer, hugging the almost useless stove, my well-formulated ideas regarding such contrary females. He listened with rapt attention, but did not offer to add a thought of his own, or encourage me to pursue the subject further. Perhaps he might have done so, however, had it been

another man's wife and not his own. My vexation at myself was so great that I could have shed tears when she, the wife, as most unexpectedly happened, broke into the conversation, discovering to me their relations. It is always rather unsafe to discuss one's neighbors thus. So thought also the Afghanese on the train discussing their queen when surprised by a reprimand from that person herself, she happening to be on board and having among her accomplishments, an acquaintance with the language they spoke.

I spent the night tugging at both ends of the "aaklä" (bed-cover) to make it reach, and banging the floor with my elbows till the very timbers rang. Lying flat on my back, straight as an arrow, on the sparsely covered floor, my chest seemed to heave up like a mountain while my head did not merely remain stationary at its base, but sank lower still. When I overturned the mountain and lay on my side, my back seemed broken, and I felt as if my ribs were piercing the flesh. I got up in the wee sma' hours, unrefreshed, and began to wonder at myself for having willingly left a decent bed back home only to bring up in a trap like this.

A glorious dawn, another breakfast, and much cheerful female chatter exerted a reviving influence, and I became somewhat readjusted by the time our cavalcade was to set forth. I was to travel with a couple of Swedish lawyers who had engaged a pony to carry their belongings, and mine if I wished it, they tripping merrily on behind. They were as polite to me as if I had been their king.

With such company I might well have been elated; but an unaccountable depression of spirits assailed me, and the secenery, which is described as the wildest in

Norway, wore for me a frowning look. With no sun at midday, passing near a vale of shattered stone, black and forbidding, under Fanaraaken's mighty wing on the left, I shivered as if struck by a chill from the Valley of Shadows. Two weeks later I received word that at this very moment little "Madit," a favorite niece, the altogether lovely, had passed through the Valley itself, and had reached a hand dumbly across the sea to give the last parting caress. But the gloom was not of long duration, for presently there opened up between the peaks, such vistas of glory as made us catch our breath and return thanks to Him who had spread such a feast before us.

Smørstabben glacier showed its broken, rumpled edge quite near, emitting from its ragged mouth a rushing stream that combined the innumerable rills trickling from the melting ice. The crumbling edge of the icy expanse was frightfully fissured; awful was the aspect of the rent and riven masses crushed into weird forms and conglomerations by the titanic pressure from behind. Although there was no hurry apparent, there were evidences of an enormous propulsive force that had had its beginning ages ago. The newly exposed blocks of ice blinked hard at the sun, for they had not met for the last thousand years. Moraines had formed on the mountainsides, designating sites of ancient glacier mouths, Nature's record of her sway during the long-forgotten days. Disintegrated stone and bits of stray soil invited vegetation in such spots when not too high, but in these dizzy altitudes the debris remained black, the sun being unable to coax it into any other form; also, it was hidden in snow the greater portion of the year.

We passed many cairns, and therefore should have

had no difficulty in keeping the right direction without a guide, but our sense of distance, and all eye-measurements in general, were sadly at fault. There was supposed to exist somewhere in this region a stone hut that we were continually on the lookout for. Soon the Swede in advance exclaimed, "I believe I see that hut." Yes, he was sure he saw it, and so were the others after they had reached the same decision through much hesitation and unbelief, by degrees. I was obliged to confess that I could not see it, though trying my best to do so. A ringing bell will say anything you wish it to; a variegated mountain scene or a mass of clouds will reveal almost any kind of figure one asks for; the Swedes wanted to see a hut and they were accommodated, but it was only a semblance, and not real. We saw other huts, but never actual ones. No doubt we had stared hard into the face of the one we were looking for, but like our old khaki-colored mule at home, when astray and wanted, it would not readily form itself into a distinct shape, — at least not till the eyes were properly focused upon it.

Pursuing our way, we soon had the pleasure of meeting some rather stiff-looking people from England, whose garb and demeanor showed them to be gentle-folk of correctest pattern. Here in the mountain wilderness, I dare say, one is apt to rub elbows with more of the elect of that country than if one were to walk up and down the Strand or Piccadilly for an hour. The Norwegian snow-fields form, in summer, a meeting-place for them. Our respective guides took to each other with perfect understanding, and were, as I later learned, and seemingly innocently enough, soon plotting between them how to make capital of such a chance meeting. The Britishers had ambled on ahead, leaving their man to

bring up the rear, himself, horse and baggage; but no sooner were they lost to sight in the intricacies of the path — this being duly noted by the sturdy Norsemen — than the straps on their respective horses were surreptiously undone and the loads deftly transferred from one beast to the other. Though I had heard that the Englishmens' guide had promised them personal attendance, he promptly forgot the agreement and assumed custody of the Swedes as if to the manner born. They did not have the heart to refuse his services. How the substitute guide was received by his new masters when he overtook them, we can only conjecture. Suffice to say that by playing this little trick our clever servants had saved themselves half the journey, with no one being the loser.

We lunched in the open beside a little brook that ran trilling and murmuring unceasingly, and that gave us most excellent beverage from its foam-flecked bosom. I cannot say that I enjoy sitting in a cramped position on the ground when partaking of a meal, nor am I quite over-fond of a meal itself when served cold and minus the proper preliminaries to give zest and make it interesting. Eating thus on the march, one becomes bluntly conscious why food is taken; at table it belongs to the happy routine; but here it addresses itself as a prosaic necessity.

The Swedes had all sorts of convenient things in their knapsacks, such as collapsible cups, can-openers, sharp knives, pins, darning-needles, safety-pins and many other things. I was made a recipient of all the benefits accruing therefrom every minute of the time spent in their gracious company. Besides the above mentioned, they had telescopes to see through, note books to write

in, legal acumen with which to pass upon and properly discriminate things, as in judging the scenery, etc.; all they lacked to be complete was a perfectly appointed office-cage on wheels, with an auburn-haired, blue-eyed young thing inside to act as typist.

As we wandered on we gradually left off leaning forwards and took to bending steadily backwards; we had reached the highest point and the incline had merely tipped the other way. There was no abatement in the majesty of the scenery, however. But one is never so eager for achievement going down as going up; hence we looked about us rather more listlessly as we proceeded. We passed by a cone-like eminence on our left where stood a monument of granite to commemorate King Oscar's visit to these regions in 1860. I climbed to the spot and found but the inscription, "Oscar. Aug. 15, 1860." The Swedes were less loyal, for they hated the climb, passing carelessly by and leaving me half a mile in the rear for my pains. They had so often seen the King himself, why should they go chasing after a princely footstep, and one long ago obliterated at that? I too had seen him, at Ladugaardsgärdet reviewing his troops, and the nobility of his bearing and benignity of his countenance had remained ever with me, and impelled me to do homage here to the prince, whose future kingly motto became, "Bröder folkets väl." (Our Brother peoples' welfare). Our guide took pains to tell of his youthful escapades, especially those concerning the pretty saeter maids stationed thereabouts, but as his story had a home-made twang, being of the oft-repeated, much-distorted variety, it behooves us not to make record of it.

While still in this region of royal reminiscence it

came to our knowledge, somehow, that we were not far from Turtegrø, where there are two tourist hotels. This was by far the most agreeable news that could reach us just then; election news or other intelligence from the outside world would have made no impression upon us; the dinner table obscured our vision for aught else. Our guide led us to the least pretentious looking of the two hostelries, Øino Hotel by name. We asked if he thought we could get this or that dish or dainty, and though he was hard of hearing, he answered unhesitatingly "yes" to every thing. Arrived at the hotel he good-naturedly shoved us into a large waiting room where there was a table on which were some old magazines and some Norwegian fancy-work. There he abandoned us, and no one appeared to give us further thought. But finally someone was aroused in an adjoining room, sidled up to our door, and shyly enquired what might be our pleasure. A solid dinner for four was our wish, translated into the very plainest of mountain vernacular and thrice repeated for effect. The maid signified that she understood, gently shut the door in our faces, and there we were. Not a sound broke the stillness, no clatter of dishes, no audible sign of culinary operations. Not much encouragement in this, surely. We should have read or lounged, studied the fancy-work or talked, or otherwise passed the time, so that we might have forgotten all about dinner till we were called; but such wisdom we lacked, and we remained painfully alert for any encouraging sign from the direction of the kitchen.

When, finally, an unruffled maid calmly announced that the result of our order would soon be forthcoming, the conduct of affairs remained Norwegian to the last; no bustle, no bluster, just a casual appearance with a

tray or two and then another, and so at last, dinner was served, complacently, unhurriedly, substantially. Though we had pouted long at the wait, the Swedes, unused to hurrying through a meal, surprised me by exhibiting not the slightest eagerness when it came, consuming it leisurely, and appearing mainly intent on intermixing sufficient conversation to provide the stomach a breathing-spell between the mouthfuls. This is the Scandinavian plan; rather the opposite to the American Dyspeptic System. We did not pay quite fifty cents apiece for a dinner neatly served, ample in quantity, and of quality unquestioned. Norwegian food is, as a rule, excellently prepared. There is not the American variety, cake and pie and preserves, for instance, being in little favor; but as nearly all eatables are harder to procure than with us, and in order to make them reach farther and do their maximum of good, they receive a thorough preparation before being served.

Two of the company decided to stay for a day's rest, leaving the remaining one and me to wander forth by ourselves. We had only a comparatively small number of miles to make, and with the requisite number of hours at our disposal in which to cover them, it would have been easy, but this time-allowance had already been too greatly reduced. We thought to make up for the reduction by adopting an exceptionally rapid pace; yet the speed attained was too low. The incline was decided, the road good, so we were enabled to fling the feet far, say eight feet or so, making thus a very sizable step; anyway, four feet. Our manner of motion was far from deliberate; in one way it resembled a dog trot and in another it did not. Though we pattered along ever so quickly there was no stooping with ears down,

for one remains remarkably straight in the back when moving down hill. Hurry as we would, our watches still spurred us on, giving us little leisure to note the surroundings in this really wonderful descent. We thought ourselves in a hurry, but the river seething alongside on our left put us to shame, being, seemingly, quite motion-mad. The water-falls appeared tame by comparison, a sheer drop never conveying a particular impression of rush; but this leaping, frothy element winding its way hurriedly, recklessly forth midst rocks and chasms, jumping this way and that as if pursued by demons, formed a rough-and-tumble scene quite dreadful to look upon. We could not keep our eyes away, however, for such a variety of stunts, of screaming antics, would scarcely be performed again, we thought, and we must see it to the end.

Sometimes it looked wonderfully grand, as for instance in one place, where the water dropped down unsuspectingly, bringing up on a great stone platform hovering, as it seemed, over thirty feet or so of nothingness, and where the wily element disported itself in an ecstacy of freedom, shooting out like a huge fan and finally dropping straight down, assuming the shape and appearance of an inverted bowl. There are no drouths in the "snow mountains"; therefore the fan always remains, perpetually shifting, yet, to the eye, identically the same.

The road took us into many a corner, made many seemingly purposeless twists and turns, dropped into hidden crevices, but never lost itself, always finding a way out. Its general trend took it downward, but there were times when we had to follow it back over long stretches and practically retrace our steps to avoid this or that obstruction, or to attain the proper inclines. To

us who were in a hurry it was aggravating in the extreme to see the road we had covered actually reaching out much nearer our destination than the part we were now on. But this is of necessity the way with mountain roads, and those who do not like them need not take them, or, if they prefer, they may avail themselves of a short-cut down the mountain side, if they have the temerity to do so.

By and by we met with houses; sometimes we would run into clusters of buildings where we thought it a wonder that the road could get past without bumping into them. This was a survival of the old-fashioned way of building in groups, several families near together, to temper the fierce blasts of wind and to prevent the complete isolation of separate dwellings by heavy snowfalls. The road being a comparatively modern innovation, we noted where it had nosed its way between the very "stabur" (store house) and dwelling, forcing the housewife to cross it each time she needed household supplies, be it of large amount or little. We took peeps into the very pantry windows, and into the living rooms, it being impossible to dispose of our faces so that the eyes did not accidentally get a passing glimpse of the most intimate scenes. We could have laid our hands on the crown of the venerable grandfather as he sat by the open window sipping his afternoon coffee, or perusing his book of prayer. The housewife busy by her doorstep moved cheerfully out of our way, and her train of toddlers followed her lead, silently and good-naturedly. The man of the house lifted his hat and lowered his pipe as we passed. These were open-hearted, trusting folks, quite at peace with the world. They were not at all upset because of prying eyes, mis-

trusting no one, and having themselves nothing to conceal. A peep through the window was not resented in the least. Shutters or window-curtains would be rather out of place; but few would know why they were used.

Continuing our way we lunged rapidly forward, there being no change in the manner of our going till we reached a point where the district of Fortun suddenly burst into view, one thousand feet straight below us. The road pressed to the very brink of this mighty declivity, and by merely tilting our heads a little to one side, we were enabled to enjoy the splendid outlook thus afforded. As we were bound thither, all we lacked was a mighty parachute to transport us hence, easily and quickly; but ours consisted only of an ordinary umbrella, and we were obliged to continue the serpentine road and walk at least eight times the crow-flying distance. The roofs of the houses directly underneath looked as if glued flat and fast to their foundations, but the yards and surroundings yawned wide, displaying themselves openly and much more completely than when viewed sidewise. A given stretch of territory cannot be properly seen except from above. Wherefore we decided in favor of the flying-machine.

CHAPTER XII

At Fortun and Beyond. Lyster Fjord

WE arrived at Fortun lame and wild-eyed, and soon learned that we had attempted the impossible in trying to reach our boat, in time, on foot. So we entered a house and sat down to a bowl of sour milk, ordering meanwhile a willing "skydskarl" (driver), to fetch and prepare his nag and kariole for our pleasure and convenience. We sat on ordinary four-legged wooden chairs at a spacious, large-leaved wooden table with no cloth, but clean, where the bowls banged and rattled as we set them down.

Three flaxen-haired girls of the family, buxom, healthy and strong, regarded us good-naturedly as we made away with the "saeter fruit" they had taken pains to fetch. They would have brought us pailfuls, had we desired it, being most willing to serve, and with seemingly no thought of reward. Though modest, they conversed openly and unaffectedly, serenely unconscious of self. They did not seem to exist for themselves; they saw only us.

They showed us the old "peis" with its yawning chimney long ago discarded for a more modern oven, yet whitewashed and kept in trim in loving remembrance of services performed of old. They told us that though the newer ovens were constructed so as to bake bread if desired, this article of food was invariably bought at the village bakeries instead, the baking being there more satisfactorily done and the charges reason-

ably low. Wholesome, well-seasoned rye-bread is generally used, while white bread is not commonly offered, being usually seen only at feasts, weddings, and other festivities. Flat-bread and large, round potato cakes rolled thin, are baked on top of the stove and are used in large quantities. These are very appetizing, especially the flat-bread, which is as thin as paper and as dry as dust, and may be munched all day long if one so chooses. Broken into small pieces and dropped into a bowl of sour milk, this makes the most delectable fare —"sodle" it is called — which, if regularily indulged in, would cure the most carefully coddled case of dyspepsia known. "Kringla" is a delicacy mainly intended to go with a lump of sugar, and the after-dinner coffee. The "kringla" are nice to bite into if the ingredients possess a fair degree of richness, but if made only of flour and water they are to the touch and taste somewhat like year-old willow sprouts. They are made like the figure 8, from strings of dough, half an inch in thickness.

Our good hostesses would fain have entertained us longer, but the master of the house appearing we learned that we had no time to linger, and so we clambered into the swaying kariole, saluted the fair ones, and off we sped. Our driver sat behind on a small seat higher than our own, holding the reins between us, thus dividing us into two clearly separate units. As we were mere men such interference did not matter, but I have known of cases where "he" or "she", or both, found this "line" of division irksome. Sometimes the driver would lift the reins to swat the flank of the diminutive horse in front, but would invariably miss the mark and hit me on the shoulder instead. At other times the reins would slyly fondle the rim of my hat, but, luckily, never

roughly so as to dislodge it. It kept me uneasy, however. Once in a while our Jehu would suddenly say "br-r-r" right in my ear, startling me and my companion very much, but not the horse, for he liked that sound; translated into English it means "whoa". He did not say "gid-ap," but smacked his lips and chirruped as we do, all of which impressed us promptly, but seemed to travel a mile before it struck those ears for which it was intended.

We were now at the bottom of the valley and quite near sea-level, as was evident from the placid flow of the stream, Dale-eleven, which had tired of its pranks and was now sleepily advancing towards its bed, Sognefjord, not far distant. We kept it company, remaining by its side all the way till we reached its very mouth. It took naps in little lakes where it had widened out for that purpose, running always a little swifter as, refreshed from its siesta, it emerged rippling at the outlet. There were meadows and grain-fields near its banks, and in places wooded tracts, where in certain spots grew "older" trees (elder) which at this season were being stripped for feed. It was tied in bundles, stacked up to dry, and later gathered and stored for winter use. The grain was strung on high poles, each bundle being speared through the heart as it was pressed downward in proper succession, manipulated by one stationed on a conveniently placed, portable scaffold. At twilight these poles clad in their yellow armor, readily formed an imaginary battalion of venerable ghosts drawn up in soldierly line, ready for the march.

Our driver took us under an over-hanging spur of the mountain where the river had left us no other leeway, but we were glad when we were out again, for

we calculated that it might as reasonably take a drop while we were there as at any other time, all things considered. Such useless speculation is the twin brother of worry, yet who has not indulged in kindred fancies, let us say on trains, steamships, automobiles and merry-go-rounds? By and by we passed a large, cleared field which was so extensive, flat and unbroken, that all at

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

"Battalion of venerable ghosts."

once it was as if I saw myself back home in the West when I gazed, suddenly grown homesick, about me; but the ever-present mountain peaks soon dispelled the illusion. How delightful, though, if the prettiest peak could have been transplanted to some cornfield at home, to make variety! Yet here where the combination showed itself perfect I had just been overtaken by a certain feeling of discontent. Exactly when and where might one happen to be perfectly pleased?

That we should run into the biggest of ice-houses was a surprise in store for us at just this moment; we were truly startled by its unexpectedness and its immensity. It stood near the edge of the river and only a short distance from where it entered the sea. So this was to be the fate of the gushing, bounding element, the companion of our day's journey, some day to be congealed into ice-crusts and then sawed asunder to be stored away in gloom and darkness, and eventually to be shipped to Germany or elsewhere to do service in butcher-shops, saloons, restaurants, hotels, or dwellings.

We had now arrived at Skjolden, at the very top of the mighty Sognefjord. My very first errand was to send my camera by parcel-post to a developer in Bergen and thus be rid of this everlasting drag. I searched for a carpenter to make a suitable case for it, wasting as much time and quite as much thought as frequently when engaged in vastly more important business. I found both the carpenter and the postmaster expeditious and willing to serve, and I learned again the lesson of one's dependence upon others, and of how very difficult the path without friendly co-operation. I have often been surprised, and not the least during my travels, to discover how much mere money can be made to accomplish, but oftener still have I been most happy to note the numerous splendid things — beautiful human traits, for instance — that reach and benefit us without the spur of gold. That postmaster's unbought smile, and the pretty string with which he helped me do up my package, quite won my heart. It enabled me to go about with a fairly cheerful face for a long time.

Happily rid of the camera, I looked about among the little cluster of buildings for a store, feeling already

somewhat unoccupied and in want of something to carry. Finally I decided to buy some crackers and cheese. The cheese is perfection, the crackers round like a dollar, toothsome, and done up handily in cylindrical packages just right for the coat-pocket. These crackers, eaten with an occasional bite of cheese, make a capital lunch aboard the steamer and even sometimes on the march.

Entering the store, I found the interior rather dark and gloomy, its contents of a varied description and somewhat intermixed and scattered. The merchant was much relieved when his customers were able to discover what they wanted for themselves, he having forgotten in which particular corner the desired commodity had hidden itself. He was pleasant and kind, but seemed happiest when no one disturbed him. He could be made to sell an article if it was necessary, but his demeanor mutely advised against further purchase. His customers gave the impression of being mere desultory callers who bought this or that only to relieve the monotomy. Hence there was no hurry or friction in the rather topsy-turvy looking establishment. All went away satisfied and perfectly pleased with the whole arrangement. Such is the atmosphere in a great many of the country stores in Norway.

The steamer shuffled up to the pier as if it actually had business there, the crew stood sternly at attention, and if the captain succeeded in doing nothing else, his demeanor gave warning that it was he that held command, and no other. There is, perhaps, more of an air of worthy officiousness about European officials, than with us. It is quite evident that their orders are expected to be obeyed and that their presence is supposed to overawe mere plain men. Their rigid adherence to rules

of duty is, however, their main characteristic, and lifts them above petty criticism. The sailors seem to have surrendered somewhat of their individuality, being rather more subdued-looking, and more easily led than our confident, self-assertive tars. The Norwegian sailor has always been at a premium among sea-faring men. Of late years, however, the drink evil has shown up among them to no inconsiderable extent.

The wharf was lined with what appeared for the most part to be curious lookers-on, who seemed placed precisely just where they wanted to be, all having a supremely satisfied and contented look. Girls with gaily wrought plaids about their heads gazed serenely upon us quite unabashed, yet not uncomprehendingly. Their healthy young faces gave token of sane living. There is no affectation or prudishness apparent. Their speech and action is free, but not rude. A great many of the boys excel in the art of tobacco-spitting. They carry long, black rolls of the poison-charged stuff in their pockets, strong enough in quality to capsize a steer. They eject a steady stream of black filthiness, letting it fly rather indiscriminately about. The girls do well to keep beyond the range of the discharges. They are not over-gallant towards the gentler sex and expect to receive, rather than to extend, favors. A good many affect a cumbrous, slouching gait, particularly the sea-going ones, appearing when in motion as if wrongly ballasted. They are as a rule well built, but do not always make graceful cavaliers. But for all this they are capable, strong and agile, and perform the "halling-kast" (an athletic feat), and similar "stunts" with surprising cleverness and ease. They are of the unassertive kind whose performance commonly exceeds their promise.

Having boarded the steamer, I sat on a forward bench, a close companion to the anchor chains, regarding with much interest the prow of the boat as it bore down upon the unsullied bosom of the glossy fjord, flinging the fragments of the broken surface right and left, and churning the mass beneath and aft into a very maelström of angry, turbulent matter. I made enquiries of the local passengers about this or that point, but found out little, the rural population not generally being much interested in water-falls, glaciers and other features of the landscape. They were very much like the majority of us in that what we may have the privilege of seeing every day, we pass by thoughtlessly. But to me it mattered little, for whether this drift or that valley carried such queer-sounding appellations as Justedalsbrä or Marifjären, the mere knowledge of the names added nothing to and took nothing from the magic spell of grandeur they cast about them. I prefer to have my scenery left largely unexplained; thus I receive its message direct and create my own impressions unmarred by outside influence.

A pretty sanatorium sat daintily perched at a considerable height up the mountain-side as we passed Lyster, and midst such a setting no doubt provided a most agreeable place of sojourn for those needing healing and recuperation. As a cure is largely dependent on the condition of the mind in the majority of ailments, it would seem that such a lovely spot, hidden from the stress and strife of our various activities, would be the ideal place to calm and restore the spirit. There were opportunities to climb or to row, to fish or to loaf, to visit or to enjoy seclusion, to eat or to refrain from eating, to bathe or not to bathe, and so on, whatever

might be the whim of the patient, tempered by orders from the doctor. Personally I should prefer to be sick among healthy people rather than be constantly reminded of myself through others suffering from similar affliction. But there are two sides to this question, the well ones also having the privilege of preferment, they naturally favoring segregation for the sick.

But very few things happened as we slid noiselessly along, leaving but a veil of smoke hanging listlessly above, and a ripple or two beneath, to caress the receding shores. The mountains added no disturbing element, as they reared themselves in majesty only to regard themselves unmoved in the glossy bosom of the deep. Little boats, seemingly all oars, dropped into view, gesticulated a while as we passed, but soon disappeared, slipping silently and unobtrusively away.

At each stopping-place the quays were thronged with people, and I, for one, expected we should do a rushing business in the taking on of new passengers; but when we steamed away the size of the crowds remained much the same. Perhaps the exchange of passengers was so remarkably even that it was not possible to note any difference; be that as it may, I am convinced that there must have been a vast army of idlers, busy with looking, and nothing else.

At Solvorn a bevy of half-grown girls came trooping on board, each with her little basket of berries, which they hoped quickly to dispose of among the passengers during the short stop. One little homely thing had no success; no one wanted to buy her wares. Noting how forlorn she was, and how wistful her look, I was moved to buy a few pennies' worth, just for her sake and with no thought of the purchase. I may have spoken kindly

to her, I do not know; but just before the steamer started, she spied me and came running to make me a gift of what remained unsold in her basket. It affected me deeply, and I bore with me throughout that wonderful night a touch as from the great source of infinite love, revealed through this lowly, sweet-natured being casually coming in my way.

As I sat musing in the dusk my attention was suddenly drawn to a loud-mouthed person who spoke Norwegian, but mixed his speech with "well," "yes-sair," "nos-sair," "dat's right," sure ting," etc. I overheard him several times saying the word "bank," but whether he meant to convey one of its Norwegian meanings, which is equivalent to a "licking", or whether he referred to a banking institution, it was some time before I could decide. But when I caught the words "swindla" and "busta," Norwegian-American expressions coined from the English "swindled" and "busted," I knew that he meant an ordinary money bank, and for which the English and Norwegians use identically the same term.

Here was a compatriot, and I must play the honest eavesdropper and learn if there was possibly a grain of truth in the generally accepted theory that the majority of Norwegian-Americans who return to Norway for a visit, are prone to be boastful. Our good citizen spoke up and said: "Yas" that bank "busta," but I wasn't "catcha" in it "it ol." Many of the "closaste friendso" I have "putta in lats a monnie" and it was "ofel" how they were "bitta." "Lats" of them couldn't "veri vel" "forda" to "loosa" as much as they did. Some "loosa croppen" on top of it all. Pretty "toughe" times for "farmaren" that "sec'n." "Baat" it is seldom

it is as "bed" as that. "Yinnerly" we "mäka" "monnie" in a "høri" and "gitta long gud." We "digga in" and "putta" in time "Ai tell yu." New comers and "evriboddy" must go to "vørk" if they "expecta" to "mäka" any "headvay." We "givva" very little for loaferar." It is thirty years since I "commenca" to "rustla" down there in Illinois, and it hasn't been "play" to "scratcha" together the "akero" I have. My "farm" of two "quarterar" is "situata" in as good "section" of "contrie" as can be found wherever you "travla." If I had "staya in Norway I "sposa" I wouldnt have "mounta" to anything of "count." *

How his listeners could manage to deduce any meaning from this "lapskaus" (Norwegian stew) I am not in a position to know, nor how they felt when with a self-satisfied air he told of his Eldorado, making his native heath look bleak and barren by comparison.

* In the above the pure Norwegian is rendered into English, with the coined words in quotation marks. The following is a verbatim report of what he actually spoke, word for word, in his so-called Norwegian: "Yas den banken busta men eg va che catcha i de it ol. Maange af dei closaste friendso eg har putta in lats a monnie aa de va ofel kolsen dei blei bitta. Lats af di konne che veri vel forda te loosa saa møche saa di jore. Somme loosa croppen paa toppen af alt. Temmelige toughe tier for farmaren den sec'n. Baat de ä sjelden de ä saa bed saa de. Yinnerly saa mäka me monnie i ein høri og gitta long gud. Me digga in aa putta in time Ai tel yu. Nykommarar aa evribody maa gaa te vork vist de expecta te make naake headvay. Me givva svärt lite før loaferar. De ä tredive aar si eg commenca te rustla der nere i Illinois aa de ha che vore play te scratcha ihop dei akero eg har. Farmen min af to kvarterar ä situata i saa go section af countrie saa kan finnast kor du travla. Hadde eg staya i Norge saa sposa eg atte eg hadde che mounta te naake af count."

Some of our good citizens think only about America when they visit Norway. Everything they chance to see reminds them of something better at home, and they must needs blurt it out for the benefit of those whom they are visiting. Their continued comparisons are utterly odious and out of place. Such blunderers partly spoil the territory for the more modest folk who have come out to enjoy what they may, and of whom there are, luckily, a considerable number also among Americans. A true tourist allows each section to retain its own particular individuality without unduly declaiming against it and proclaiming which is the better or the worse. The people have come to regard us more quizzically than of yore. They make their own deductions about the many acres, the great crops, the money-making, and our other astounding capacities and propensities; but they are often mistaken enough. It is not to be expected from the often rather distorted and conflicting data within their reach, that they should be able to fix us aright. The bare truth about our wonderful America is unbelievable enough to Europeans without being dressed up or embroidered.

Sogn is not known exclusively for its scenery, there being considerable interest in fruit-raising, apples being the more common. Various kinds of berries, such as strawberries, gooseberries and blueberries abound. The ordinary Norwegian grain crops are also raised with good success.

The imperceptible shifting from daylight to twilight, from twilight to the pale night shadows, took place so very gradually that we hardly noticed it. The mountains rose majestically straight from the sea, from now on, providing no accommodating ledges for dwellings for

men, or any source of subsistence for man or beast. The water had put on a coverlet of much deeper dye for the night, and lay in perfect repose, undisturbed, save for an inquisitive fish peering through or hitting the sleeping surface with its wriggling tail. A few water-fowl swam in it, but their feathery down lay so gently upon its breast that it was not roused from its nap. All had grown still upon deck, there was nothing in sea, earth or heaven to cause distraction, and I remained spellbound, hypnotized, by the sublime grandeur of the hills, and wrapt in foolish ecstasy by the mysterious Voice of Silence, breathing happy promise to my heart and soul.

We glided into port at midnight; and what did I do but press my purse closer? For might not the shadow of Norway's most notorious thief, Gjest Baardson, haunt the place still, with a predilection for unguarded personal possessions of whatever sort? Gjest has become a national figure inasmuch as he stole from the rich and gave to the poor, being pursued by both.

Lardalsøren sits pent up between high mountains at the very bottom of a fjord. The landing-place was half a mile from the town proper, and this distance I stealthily covered, purse-strings clutched tight, before I could engage in the hotel-hunt. I was promptly turned away wherever I applied for lodging, the sleepy hosts telling me they were full, and unanimously declaring that they had nowhere to sleep themselves. It was a serious enough situation for me, for I needed rest, but it was exasperating to see how little any one cared whether I got it or not. Usually at hotels one receives the impression that he has been expected a long time, but it should be borne in mind that this is solely because

they are not full. For when that is the case, such concern ceases. A half-policeman finally took me in tow and led me unresistingly to an old widow where, at last, I succeeded in obtaining a very short bed and a room with a previous, snoring occupant for company. In my inmost soul I disliked this raucous, grinding music, but dared not remonstrate for fear of receiving an invitation back to the street. The awful noise pursues one into the very land of Nod and acts upon one like the sleep-numbed pain of a boil or felon, only to burst with renewed force upon your consciousness when this thrusts you wide-eyed and open-eared into full and complete realization of the surroundings. If it had not been for the stupor of sleep that ever and anon made a feint of returning, I should, no doubt, have taken proper revenge. Many a man has escaped bodily injury during his most active snoring spells because of the lassitude, or lethargy preceding sleep, which restrains his ill-used companions from exerting themselves. The next morning is your time, but the offender usually looks so rested, sweet and pleasant that you have not the heart to pick a quarrel with him, and if you did he would only smile at you and say it was all imagination, he never having snored in all his life.

At breakfast I met the kindliest mannered fellow in the kingdom eating eggs and animatedly conversing with the old landlady; and of the two of us I am sure any fair-minded person would have suspected me of being the sleep-disturber, not he. The wretch had the effrontery to greet me most effusively, rose to offer me his chair, and the old widow catching the contagion ambled hurriedly into the kitchen to prepare me an egg and a bowl of milk, kind as could be. How was I then,

under the circumstances, to nurse my wrath and continue to feel sore and misused, even though the provocation had been very great.

Together with the milk and bread and the solitary egg, the widow fetched with her, also, another man with a grievance. Mine was left unspoken, but the newcomer did not withhold his. I soon saw myself as I might have been, and was suddenly seized with a feeling of thankfulness when I realized what I had escaped. He poured out his tale ungarnished and unvarnished, but quite without benefit to any one, himself included. It appeared that the "confounded" automobile was taking away his business as kariole-driver, and he had now adopted certain defensive tactics, though quite futile, to be sure — namely, the old method of carrying grudges and airing grievances, the time-tested earmarks of unworthy defeat. Instead of adjusting himself amicably and as well as might be to the newer, inevitable conditions, he preferred to drone around and "knock." I made free to offer advice from my "fulness of experience," taking as an example a snoring man, saying: "Since we cannot change the method of sleep, and do away with the snore, we shall either have to adapt ourselves to it or enter a hermit's cell, or betake ourselves to a lonely island. And so with the auto: it has come to stay, with or without our permission, and we may as well embrace it, and stay with it. The less we buck against the inevitable, the more strength we conserve with which to accustom ourselves to the different order of things." Of course he decided to live, according to my advice; people always do; I therefore confidently expect to see him enrolled as a chauffeur the next time I visit his town.

CHAPTER XIII

Nærøfjord

I SAW but little besides the breakfast table at Lärdalsøren, for the steamer bound for Gudvangen left early in the morning, and there was no time for me to go gadding about if I was to be one of its passengers. The day was as beautiful as heart could wish, and I sat on deck close to the anchor-chain drinking in every available sight and scene. The mountains were too precipitous and bare to be so very beautiful in themselves, but the general effect was extremely grand. When we entered the famous, Nærøfjord the remarkable surroundings thrilled me with a delight so keen that mere words can convey no adequate expression. The rugged hills, the placid water, the clean snow-fields and glistening glaciers, together with the lovely hue of the heavens, combined to produce an effect that spoke volumes to the soul; and as soul language is not printable, we render our sensations but inadequately in a written account.

The narrowness of this fjord was actually alarming, for time after time I thought we must assuredly become wedged fast, and perhaps even sink, for to the depth there seemed to be no limit, the water looking black and bottomless and the mountains dropping sheer on either side. At times we seemed completely locked in, and I could no more tell through what wall we had entered than at what bank the wizard at the helm expected to point and say his Open Sesame.

The joy of discovery was continually with me, for I came upon something new and unlooked for at every bend and turn; and though it had already been seen by others, it had lost none of its charm because of that. A grand mountain, a lovely waterfall, or a beautiful star should appear equally attractive whether it has previously had other admirers, or none at all. I love to view a pretty thing for its own sake, hence have no objection to taking the "beaten path" if it otherwise suits my fancy. The fjords or mountains cannot be spoiled by a fervently-admiring gaze: the Coliseum does not shift or crumble under the visitor's appreciative contemplation. Närøfjord has drawn hosts of visitors every year, but none of its charms have been looked away, nor has the valley of the same name grown less wonderful. I know, for several years ago I looked upon it from its opposite end, and still it remains intact for all of the million eyes that have since devoured it. Within the Närø valley as viewed from Stalheims hotel, and also further along, is comprised one of the most wonderful nature displays in the world; the adjacent Närøfjord adds peculiar lustre of its own. A wonderful scene, like a beautiful melody, must be allowed to act directly upon our consciousness; its message cannot reach us through hearsay; hence description avails little, wherefore I refrain from further attempts to describe the indescribable.

Many have calculated that there must of a surety be something of material value somewhere about these mountains; and if not altogether on the outside, then why not inside? Norwegian miners discovered long ago, however, that the various ores, though occurring numerously enough, are usually not rich, and hence not gen-

erally profitable. There are iron, gold, silver, cobalt, zinc and copper mines, but only a few have yielded appreciable returns. Certain kinds of marketable stone especially slate and an inferior marble, have been found in large quantities and have been quarried with considerable profit. Of quarried stone, granite and syenite come next in importance. The loftier mountains consist nearly altogether of gneiss and mica-slate. The almost unlimited waterpower of Norway now being gradually subdued and harnessed will, when more fully utilized, make more profitable the working of scattered ores, as well as giving additional impetus to mining operations in general.

There were boats galore lying at anchor near Gudvangen, the little village planted at the extreme end of the fjord. Many of the rocks and boulders were picturesquely painted over in various colors with the names of the different craft intertwined artistically therein, making a striking effect, to say the least. Some daring sailors had climbed, in some manner or other, the sheer faces of precipices and inscribed in startling fashion their hand-writing on the walls.

The wharves presented a scene of liveliest animation as the blustering little motor-boats danced hither and thither, skipping in and out among the steamers lying moored, making up or emptying out be-ribboned, gala-clad cargoes. There were ships from different parts of the world; and here the kaiser's yacht used to touch. The German ruler has done much to attract attention to the charms of cruising in the grand fjords of Norway. In commemoration of his delightful vacation experiences, including trips to the Northland covering a period of twenty years or more, he has erected,

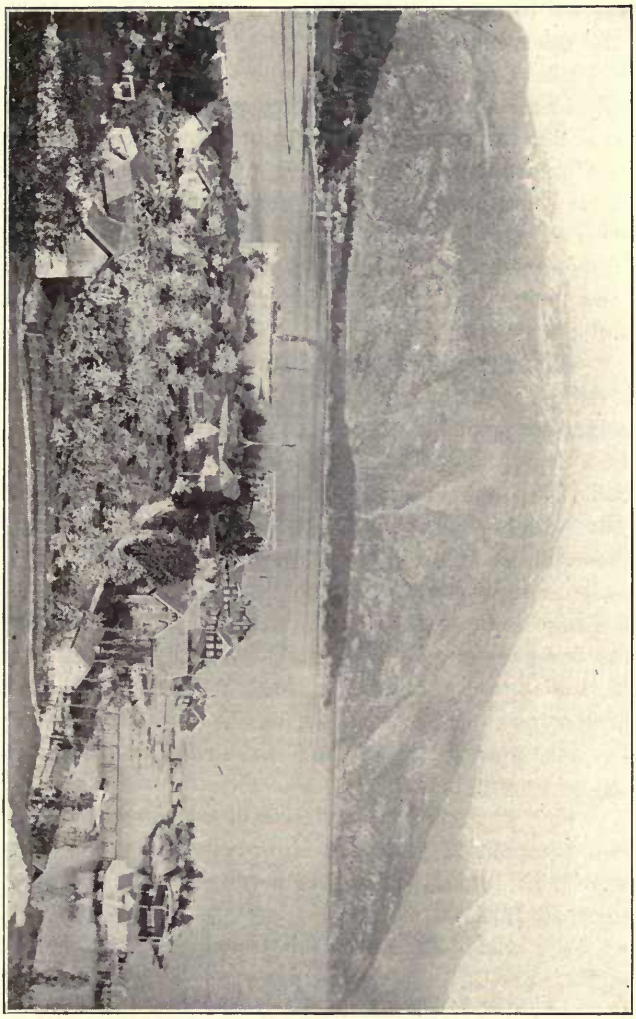
in Sogn, a mighty statue of the legendary Fridtjof as a gift of appreciation, an expression of good-will to the Norwegian people.

Returning I retraced my course by the same steamer back through the devious, winding ways of the fjord, still the same, albeit magically transformed through altered positions and points of view. Though most suitably placed aboard ship one cannot satisfactorily view both sides at once, neither may one jerk the head continually backward and forward, obtaining fleeting glimpses merely, and still expect to retain the impressions. One must calmly survey a given point ahead, as in a moving picture, keeping awake to the steadily shifting panorama in a direct line of vision, sacrificing, the while, much that beckons athwart and aft.

Thus we came upon the scenery behind its back, approaching it unawares, catching it in graceful poses and in places quite surpassing its former loveliness.

After we had rounded our point and were coming up the fjord towards Flaam, I saw waterfalls plunging madly away from their mountain beds and gaily flipping their tails in the wind, only to dissipate into a fine mist before finally entering the water below. The cascade would come falling from stupendous heights, brave and unbroken at first, but the insistent caress of the sportive breeze, together with its own natural bent to disintegrate into drops, soon made havoc with its supple body, tearing it into shreds and fragments, and displaying therein a rainbow as beautiful and perfect as possible.

Arrived at Flaam, I was in splendid mood for the long walk before me, and did not hesitate long as to which foot first to put forward. I left the town to make



Balholmen.

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

Sogn.

its own history, for I could not spare a moment to make researches and write it up.

I have so often looked around without knowing why, only to meet a pair of eyes engaged in sizing me up and no doubt responsible for the subtle influence causing the involuntary turn, that I was not altogether surprised when I found myself thus unexpectedly gazing into the eyes of my Juvas-hut acquaintance, Prof. Dr. Hamel from Amsterdam. He stood with his knapsack in readiness, being on the eve of departure by my own route — and off we went.

The Flaam valley threatens to usurp first place, leaving the sister valley Närødal to look to its laurels, meantime growing more and more popular every year as a romping place for tourists. The hotels at either end of it provide all necessary comforts and conveniences. The scenery is grand. The inevitable river rages through, as in all other valleys adjacent to the snow-covered mountains. As the depression is very narrow the road is hard put to it to wedge itself in between the towering cliffs and the freakish stream. In many places it was actually driven to lean out over the hissing, boisterous torrent, crowding closely upon it and providing only a frail support and barrier between us and the angry tumult below.

Except a certain stretch near its mouth, the valley is not populated by native Norwegians; but the constant stream of tourists furnishes a mixed company of transient sojourners.

We wended our way laboriously up the face of the incline, and in our painful progress we were frequently obliged to step out of the road to allow the passage of those who rolled without effort on wheels down hill.

We resented being shoved aside into mud puddles, dust heaps, rocks and tangled brush, but could do nothing to protect ourselves; custom was against us; the drivers held stolidly to the middle of the road overlooking us completely.

The last snow-drift of the season sat ensconced in a snug retreat in a crotch in the mountains, where the sun shed its luster seemingly in vain, overhanging cliffs casting a perpetual shadow. Here the drift reposed apparently safe from the onslaught of its enemy ninety million miles away; but on our arrival at its base we saw its life elixir slowly trickling away in a tiny stream slyly issuing from beneath. It was in the toils after all, and it would only be a question of weeks before the entire mass would be distintegrated. It was a refreshing sight for the dusty traveller to meet with this cool body at such a low altitude; we were used to climbing several thousand feet before arriving at the beds of its sister drifts. We left it with regret, and turned often to view its frilled bosom as we ascended higher and higher, and it in turn crept into itself, becoming finally a mere speck as we neared Myrdal station. Here the road took a winding course to enable it to mount gradually the steep incline leading to the railroad that had climbed from another direction into the heights at this point. There were some pretty waterfalls that turned our thoughs from ourselves and buoyed up our spirits during the laborious ascent. The territory below, though once passed through, appeared in new poses, looking wondrously grand as we paused, ever and anon, to contemplate it. A glimpse of the valley may be had from the train if one keeps a sharp look-out.

We met many tourists going down, and all seemed

so wrapped up and awed at the prospect before them that few, if any, bestowed a look, not to mention a sympathetic glance, upon the poor, puffing wretches who labored upwards in the opposite direction. A "skydskarl" who had delivered his load and was resting his horse by the wayside, proved a source of diversion at this juncture. He addressed us familiarly, questioning us as to our professions and aims in life, and also regarding our immediate future plans. We could not resent this, for we took it that he had just as much license to know something about the various individuals that invaded his country, as we had a right to exercise the art of imposition to the extent of volleying questions right and left, and to whomsoever we chose thus to grill. We did it to learn, while he was mostly actuated by curiosity; but who should exercise censorship and restrict his privilege? After he had pumped others to his heart's content we came in for our turn, and soon learned that he was busy by spells, the tourist travel having its particular season and dwindling to almost nothing at other times. When he could pick up return loads on his trips he was getting rich fast, but as this happy condition of things was of but scant occurrence, his get-rich-quick method resolved itself into a slow one before the season ended. He complained that the easy life made a loafer of him and in no small degree unfitted him for other work during the rest of the year. Sometimes the money would come in almost too freely, spoiling him, as for instance when some misguided philanthropist with more dollars than judgment would broadcast them about just to observe the effect. These ill-balanced money-bags awaken unreasonable desires in unsophisticated country folk, and have a tendency to spoil the territory for those

of more modest means. The tipping-evil causes its full share of annoyance and mischief here as well as in other places where it is in vogue.

Our friend had no eye for scenery and was at a loss to know why so many people came into this broken, rugged country to sojourn when, for instance, one might stay on a nice, flat farm in Iowa and see nothing but pretty things all one's life. I thought of the vast green cornfields, the ripening grain, the rich, rolling meadows and pastures with their flocks, the fine buildings and groves; I saw it all in my mind's eye, and suddenly it dawned upon me that I had not properly appreciated it before. My friend had eyes, but saw not; the grandeur at home beckoned unheeded; but I was no better than he, for we had both indulged in extravagant dreams of the grand and the beautiful far away, overlooking, meanwhile, many of the wonders lying at our feet.

Arrived at the end of the sinuous road, we had not far to go before we reached our hotel, named Vatnehalsen. It was a great, rambling structure containing room enough for a small army, being indeed at the time occupied by one, tourists though they were. They sat at ease on chairs and divans, a pleasant human family-group, all bent on being congenial, care-free and happy, forgetful of titles and dispensing with useless ceremony.

The doctor and I settled ourselves with sighs of happy contentment on an unoccupied divan in a corner of one of the spacious rooms, where we were soon occupied in observing our neighbors, forgetting, meanwhile, that we were being observed ourselves, though so artfully that no one suspected it. We are all adepts at seeing without seeming to see.

Among those thus indiscriminately assembled there

happened to be several with gifts and abilities for the entertainment of others. One gracious lady, of quite regal mien, took her stand with modest dignity by the "flygel" (grand piano), so that all might hear, and flooded the rooms with song. She awoke responses in many souls, and some actually took fire sufficiently to display powers of their own. We discovered, here as elsewhere, that the beautiful art of song is a common accomplishment; that it remains with us, and in us, and is not really dependent on various outside handiwork to further its expression. Stripped of everything but life, we may still create song, though we chance to be on a barren island or a desolate mountain top. It is these higher things, accumulated and garnered within, that really elevate and are best worth while.

Dinner was served in an oblong annex that conveyed the impression of almost limitless dimensions; but I was so confused that I could not well estimate anything. I thought of little else than my aged collar, while the doctor shame-facedly hid his soiled cuffs as best he might. Imagine us two travel-stained scare-crows sitting opposite a prima-donna, or some such personage, and with an immaculately dressed aristocrat and a prim silken figure placed on either side of us. These had no doubt reclined on the softest of cushions while making their excursions in the mountains, and had seldom, if ever, forgotten dress and pose. Self-consciousness is an uncomfortable feeling, anyway. It was present on both sides, and to both it caused no little annoyance; to them because of a certain feeling of superiority, to us because of an imagined inferiority. But at bottom not one of us really felt any serious concern. Happily for all, we

finally forgot trifles, opened our mouths and began to exchange commonplaces. Lo! the primma-donna so doted upon roughing it and would like to walk as we did; and so did the dude! The despised collars and cuffs were straightway forgotten. The food was set in tempting array well within our reach, and all obeyed their natural instincts, helping themselves according to their several desires, and forgetting as usual duly to consider the results of such indulgence. We "hove to" because we liked it; so do savages; nor could the learned professor on our left quite dissociate himself from mere fleshly needs and cravings, but applied himself to his viands as vigorously as the rest. I saw representatives from many different walks in life, of utterly different temperamental moulds and cast of features, but at table they were as one; they chewed and swallowed ridiculously alike, becoming very insignificant in the act. What a lot of petty, truckling toddlers we mortals be, as we sit before the Giver of all things, as He daily holds forth his fingers to be seized, squeezed and sucked.

To be taken away from so much good cheer, warmth and enjoyment, and led into solitude with nothing but walls, a white counterpane, a pitcher of cold water and a roomful of chilly atmosphere with an unfeeling looking glass to show you up just as you are — unless downright drowsy the change is unsufferably unwelcome, quite excruciatingly so, to a sensitive, company-loving soul. Then is when you think most fondly of home and mother, father, brother and sister, and get a touch of homesickness. It is when thus standing face to face with himself, which usually happens in a disagreeable place, that a man asks, for instance, such aimless questions:

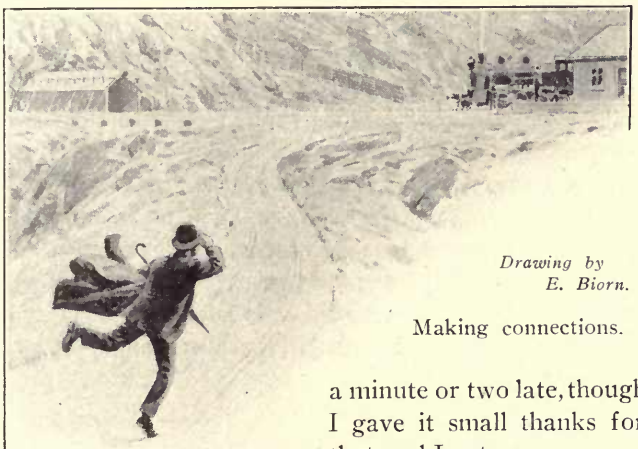
Is this business of travel worth while? Where, oh where did I get that bump of curiosity, this restlessness, this climbing habit? — and so on.

Pulling myself together, I charged for the couch, but could hardly keep from thinking disagreeable thoughts as I touched the uninhabitable spot and felt the sudden rising of goose-flesh. These summer mountain beds are the staunchest to withstand warmth of almost any that I know of. They are never treated to the ameliorating influence of a stove, nor are the mattresses always thick, or the coverings so very heavy; hence the weary mountain-climber's body, lethargic and unquickened in the early stages of repose, has much ado to keep away the tremors, and to supply the proper amount of surplus heat required underneath the clammy, clinging snow-aired sheets.

The doctor and I were to meet at breakfast at a certain late hour the next morning, but the meeting did not take place. Making enquiry of the hotel maids as to the departure of my train I was pleasantly informed that it was due immediately. I grabbed my belongings with one hand, paid my bill with the other, and then ran. I had at least half a mile to cover before reaching the station. Both legs and lungs and heart begged to be let alone yet for awhile, too much having been required of them yesterday, and I would gladly have obeyed; but as the train was the only one due to arrive that forenoon, I was resolved to try to catch it. The creaking, rebellious machinery was accordingly set in motion, and up hill and down hill it went, and with such speed that the air seemed to grow thin and lungs too small, with the heart hitting sledge-hammer-like wherever I took a fancy to imagine it. If I thought of it somewhere about the

chest, it pounded away there to beat the band; if the mind transferred it to its own temple, it hit the head as with a club; and if consciousness once happened to center about the big toe, presto! it was there. But when it jumped into the throat I liked it the least of all.

Catching one's train in this strenuous fashion is one of the severest experiences. But that blessed train was



Drawing by E. Biorn.

Making connections.

a minute or two late, though I gave it small thanks for that, and I got on some way, but did not recover my true self for an hour. I could not properly note the scenery while in such a condition, nor was there anything of surpassing interest to record. There were many short tunnels which plunged us painfully into darkness, and, there being absolutely nothing to observe the while, we could but remain still and wait for something of which as yet we knew nothing. I came near forgetting that the imagination was actively at work; and as our inner vision is really the most comprehensive, I took to reconstructing former sights, thus seeing things in the dark, after all.

Nowhere else than in the imagination may we see a bit of scenery from all directions and in all conceivable shapes, and all at once. The imagination provides the most perfect panorama, flitting instantaneously from place to place and exhibiting any or all sides of a given stretch simultaneously.

Thus we were occupied rehearsing, retrospecting, doing what is called doing nothing, all the while we were trundling slowly through the pitch-dark tunnels. The comparatively sudden glimpses of day which momentarily blinded our eyes, revealed, as soon as we were able to take a peep, a considerable number of openings between the tunnels, these openings being almost invariably protected by snow-sheds built over the track. They hindered the view considerably, but we made out that we were at a height where we could no longer expect to see many cows or goats or much grass. There was, however, plenty of snow, and languid little lakes overflowing, here and there, for the benefit of the ever-hungry mountain streams.

CHAPTER XIV

Ose Glacier

ARRIVED at Hallingskei, the first station, I left the train and started forth for the only house in town, Fjelstova Hotel. I sought two things, lunch, and a guide to show me across Ose glacier. I happened to be the only guest at the hotel, and hence received the undivided care and attention of the exceptionally willing and proficient hotel-maid. She compounded a most delectable dish from milk and cream and other splendid ingredients, and it so appealed to my fancy that I almost resolved not to come away. Having thus once been spoiled, I could not bear to think that this was to be my first and last and only taste. Had I been somebody's cook I am afraid my pockets would soon have bulged with recipes picked up here and there. Embryo Mrs. Rorers may be found in every bush in Norway.

I engaged as guide a railroad hand that happened conveniently on the spot, and who, as I later learned, was really supposed to accommodate stray wayfarers such as I. The route is seldom traversed by tourists. We crossed an open and really quite level place, where a few blades of pale green grass were growing, and where there was the semblance of a saeter hut tucked away at one side amid the crowding rocks. This was once a marketplace where the people of Hardanger and Hallingdal met of old to exchange produce, cattle, sheep or any marketable ware that could be transported hither on its own legs or on the backs of man or beast, but never on

wheels. There was not only the mere matter of trading going on, but there were fights as well, and these came to be remembered longer than the business done, stories of particular feats of prowess being handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. It is said that the men of Valdres, when going abroad to market, always carried cloth for bandages, and winding sheets, in the event of being knocked out in some scrimmage. Though, no doubt, a bit of local fiction, it is reported to be the saying of a strapping fellow of Valdres as he returned from one of these market places: "This trip I killed only seven."

My guide was very talkative, and also somewhat selfish; for he never offered to give me a lift with my bundle, nor would he listen to expressions of any kind save such as were formulated by himself. Norwegians are generally modest, but this one was not. He was a "knocker," besides. He loved to find fault with his employers, with his government, with the world. He, only, was the perfectly flawless one. He made me want to apologize for everything, for myself and every one else. He was of the self-important type frequently found in certain rural communities around which the world moves, or ought to move. I was more interested in the scenery than in his gossip; but he was able to give scarcely any information of value regarding the territory which he as guide was supposed to know. I had to depend on my chart for such knowledge. He stayed with me for about three hours, when, having led me into the midst of the great Ose glacier, he pointed toward the distant haze, saying, "There lies Hardanger." He then proceeded to leave me, for his time was up and his pay earned, according to his schedule. He told me where to

go to descend into Ose Valley, but as I was aware of the general direction myself I promptly forgot his advice.

I was glad to get rid of this chatterbox, and surrounded with silence, and disturbed by nothing, I contemplated the wonderful panorama spread out before me. I was standing on the very pinnacle of this great glacier and could see others in the distance, blanketing vast areas, covering every crevice, and each hiding a million secrets of its own. I caught glimpses in the distance of some of the higher points in the districts of Nummedal and Østerdal, saw Mt. Haarteigen rising sheer with its glowering head, beheld the vast tract of high plateau called "Hardanger vidden" where thousands of reindeer are pastured, and came upon many things else which were interesting to see but which it avails little to attempt to describe. Looking west and oceanward, my gaze met the back of the mighty Vasfjären, which looks like a mighty amphitheatre as viewed from Hardanger fjord. In the direction of Voss were other vast rocky heights, and between their towers, steeples and minarets, still other mountain-peaks appeared, smaller, but further away, beyond which, especially in a south-westerly direction peeps of the ocean were obtained. The most wonderful view of all lay before me in the valley of Ose, with its glassy fjord reflecting its irregular contour; and looming beyond, many miles distant, hung "Folgefonden," one of the most wonderful glaciers in the world. I saw the mighty Hardanger Jökul on whose slopes, near Finse, great summer ski-tournaments are held.

I realized, however, that I could not continue my material existence very long by merely feeding the spirit, so decided to ramble along downward in the di-

rection of the shimmering fjord brightly beckoning in the sunlight, where I might hope to find rest, food and folks. But it took considerable time and effort to reach my goal. Though still in a sufficiently exalted state, I could not quite overcome my natural timidity, and was unable to hinder a few hairs from taking turns at standing on end, now and then, as greater or smaller dangers loomed up before me. I will not attempt to describe how I slid and slipped and hitched and humped downward, till I finally come to some gaping clefts in the mountain I had to cross, which made me pause awhile to consider. It seemed that right here the mountain had become topheavy and had allowed innumerable clefts to form, enabling it somehow to glide into an easier position. They were wholly on the flat surface and gave no warning till one held the leg poised preparatory to stepping into nothing. Then the wary eye signalled danger ahead, and the fateful step was not taken. Those who have explored these crevices say they contain not a few skeletons of deer and other animals. Sometimes animals have been rescued before life has become extinct. A valuable dog in pursuit of game tumbled in, together with his quarry, but was rescued after much effort by the hunters. The apparent depth of the clefts is generally not great, hence it has proved not impossible to rescue human beings who have fallen into them. Being alone, I shuddered at the thought of being caught in a trap like this, and took increasing care as I made my way out of the treacherous zone.

I saw the most curious waterfall where, just before it leaped, a huge boulder lay poised itself ready to take the plunge, but never quite decided to do so. The water pushed on behind to help as best it might, but grown

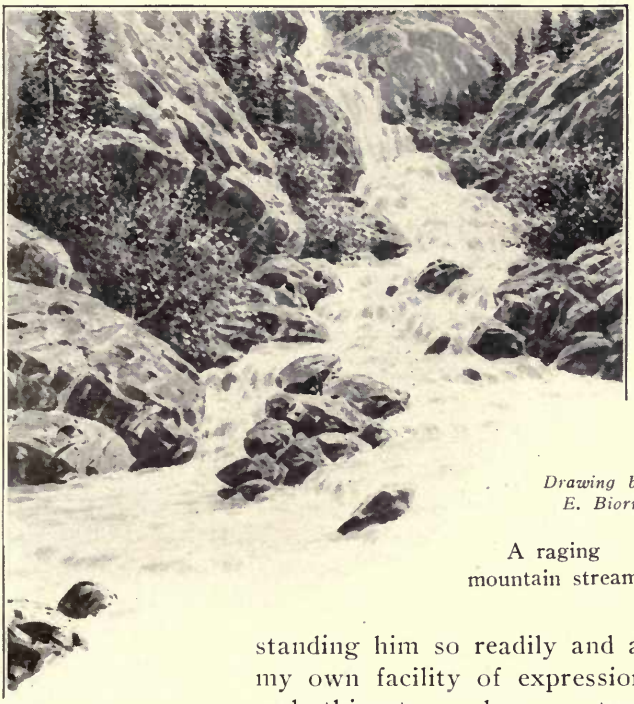
forever impatient it swirled swiftly round at its base and sped happily downwards, a hundred feet or so, only to be brought up with a crash against a heap of fallen stones which sent the spray flying and tore the air into shreds and fragments of sound. There were several silver streaks that shot down from the lofty Vasfjären; and their fall was cruel, considering their slender, weak-looking bodies, and the stupendous height. It was almost too much for me to enjoy all this grandeur alone, and I wished for an appreciative companion to share my rapture. Yet, to be exact, I must admit that often when quite solitary and alone Nature has addressed me in her most attractive, winsome manner. She speaks to each one separately and would not be interrupted; hence her generous provision of opportunities for isolation and silence.

I met a solitary ram at about this time, and conjectured that there must be other sheep in the vicinity and perhaps cows, with every liklihood of a saeter near by. The ram bowed to me and jauntily jerked back his foot, which salutations I politely returned, whereupon we both went about our business, I to my walking, he to his cropping. The saeter turned up, sure enough, and with it two girls and their aged father. It was a relief to me to have a taste of human companionship again after my long lonesome climb in this wildest of valleys. Beyond the hut it grew more fearful still. The valley narrowed, and in some places were fantastic, insecurely poised rocks that threatened to come down any moment. Nor did they pose thus threatingly in vain, for there had been a terrific rain of rocks at some period, millions of fragments lying about to dispute the way and make trouble.

After meeting with the ram I had come across no other live-stock till now, when, as I was threading the difficult path amid the fallen stones, I encountered a flock of sheep busily feeding. They did not take as kindly to me as their leader, but fled down the declivity at sight of me. I found myself in advance of a few of them, and what did these do but leave the path, helter-skelter, abandoning themselves to the horrors of stone and chasm on either side, rejoining their companions as best they might and with a great to-do of bobbing tails, far, far below. They seemed as sure-footed as goats, and kept to their feet as if their lives depended on it, which indeed was true. There are said to be not far from 1,500,000 sheep in the country. They are generally rather small and slender, their weight averaging scarcely ninety pounds. The meat is exceptionally fine, and has a rather better flavor than American mutton. .Home-spun woolen clothing was formerly much used, and is still used, to some extent.

The inevitable, noisy, reckless river accompanied me all the way down the incline, pushing its way through where there was the least hindrance, leaving the poor path to take second choice and make its way as best it might. It was the roughest walk I have ever taken, and it seemed endless to me, coming fatigued as I did from the distant cloud regions, but I finally spied a house, which was not a saeter, and I knew then that I should soon arrive at a proper dwelling-place of man. When I arrived there I found the man, it is true, but he was quite alone. He was old, but very spry, and most willing to serve me. Part of the family were at a distant saeter, a few in America, and some in the grave. It gave me a start when he proceeded to deliver himself of

the very thickest of Hardanger dialects, one of the many with which we, as children, had grown familiar among our neighbors back in old Iowa. It made me feel instantly at home. He was vastly pleased at my understanding him so readily and at my own facility of expression, and this, to a large extent, in his very own style of speech. When I told him that I had a brother who could handle a dozen or so different Norwegian dialects, he fairly gasped and wished to know what room there was left for the language of the country, namely English. I told him



Drawing by E. Biorn.

A raging mountain stream.

we seemed to get along, having gone little to any other but English schools all our lives, and seldom writing any other language.

"My friend," says he, "you know more Norwegian dialects than I do."

"That is no more than natural," I answered him, "the reason being that you are set apart in little groups, each in its separate valley, while in Iowa there are no such barriers, just fences, and the new-comer from the North Cape may jump these fences and mingle his quaint speech with that of his fellow-countryman from Kristiansand; and there you are. It needs no trick for a listening urchin to gather the gist of the dialogue or acquire the twang."

He looked at me with shining eyes, but vouchsafed nothing further.

I told him I was tired and not without a desire for food, and he believed me; for he had made the journey himself in his youth, and knew I spoke the truth. He brought me some aged milk that made me scream because it was so thoroughly sour, but when crusts of the famous Hardanger cake were munched with it, the whole went down quite appetizingly and soon brought about a feeling of well-being both in mind and body. He would have me drink some home-made beer that had grown very old and lost most of its flavor (thus he modestly explained), but this was exaggerated, for I found to my sorrow that the seemingly innocent glassful contained its maximum of strength. He called my attention to a large map of the United States sent to him by his son, and which he had studied every day, but with little benefit; he could not realize the vast distances, and supposed that I would be familiar with every spot.

Learning that I wished to go to Ulvik that night, my host proposed to row me across the fjord to Öivinstaa, whence I might walk the rest of the distance. His generous offer suited me well, and we accordingly started for the boat. He pulled and I pushed, thus inducing the "Sea-gull" to quit the old boat house where it reclined

Drawing by E. Biorn.

Ose fjord at night.

but awkwardly anyway, at least when compared with the bouyancy and ease with which it rested on the water. Jacob was seventy years old, and I offered to do the rowing; but he would have none of it, taking the oars himself, and asking me to sit back in the stern and enjoy the night and the scenery.

Silence, broken only by the faint murmur of distant

waterfalls, wrapped us in its embrace. The fjord appeared to be a vast looking-glass, where the towering mountains never tired of regarding themselves. Many of them leaned too far back, however, to be able to admire their own charms, but they could regard their neighbors across the fjord without seeming to see, by merely taking a side-glance into the deep. Their reflection was perfect and saved me from bending back my neck to view the original itself. But I had an uneasy feeling that they might drop away into space, clear down to the moon, which I saw peeping through the tree-tops on a distant mountain-side. It was all so very wonderful; yes, and more entrancing than seeing the finest art gallery in the world.

Old Jacob did not seem to notice the things about him, but looked into the dim vistas of the past, fetching forth therefrom stories reminiscent of his youth, to which I listened with rapt attention. He told me of his playmates from nearby Espe where he was born, and surprised me by telling of one of them in particular, an old lady, a neighbor of ours in Iowa and one of the early settlers, She had gone away ever so many years before, but he seemed to see her still, just as she had looked in her youth. I knew her as a wrinkled old soul living past man's allotted time, strong in spirit, but decrepit in body and ready and eager to make the last journey Home. I told him of this, and it pleased him; but there came a shadow across his face as he confessed that, because of much tribulation in life, he, unlike his childhood's friend, had for awhile forgotten that there was a Providence. Now, he could trace the finger of the Most High through it all, and had learned to be thankful for the crosses as well as for other favors. As I stepped upon

the wharf at Öivinstaa the hearty grip of his hand and his "God bless you" gave me, too, courage, and I stood long regarding the lonely figure receding into gloom and wearing, as it were, the halo of a chastened spirit.

It was late at night, and there was not a single light at Öivinstaa to make me welcome; so I did not tarry, but took to the roadway at once. I went as in a dream, thinking about old Jacob, but, arriving at a place where the road forked, I was abruptly recalled from visions of the past to solve questions of the future. The most pressing problem was, which road must I take? Why had I not listened with more attention to Jacob's directions, so painstakingly given? I berated myself roundly and had the satisfaction, at least, of delivering a splendid scolding, but it furnished no consolation. As it would not do to debate about it very long, I decided in favor of the best looking road, hoping that chance would make it the right one. But, still dissatisfied, I determined to rouse the inmates in the first house I came to, to learn the truth. That house seemed to have been placed in a position of defence, for I stumbled across fences, ditches, and rock piles before I finally attained it; and being in no gentle mood, I knocked harder than necessary. I did not need to knock again for I heard almost on the instant a chair overturned, and directly a clamp, clamp, as if a gun were being used as a walking stick. It was only a pair of wooden shoes, however, making for the door at which I was causing so much disturbance. I expected to see a face all awry from vexation and disturbed sleep, but saw, instead, the mildest-featured person in the world standing at attention in his rather scant attire, ready to do or say anything to oblige me. It was this kindly attitude of his that made me remember the incident. May

a shower of blessings fall upon him for being so gentle and considerate! I left the place in a better mood, following a path he designated instead of blazing another way of my own. I might have kept the road, for it was the right one, but there was a world of difference in my attitude now that I knew positively.

I was surprised to find many loiterers by the roadside, now that I did not have need of them. There were couples that had locked arms, that held hands, that looked into each others' eyes, that whispered, that caressed, and did a great many other ridiculous things; and with cupid darting hither and thither I felt that I had come into his very own country, and accordingly made preparations to be shot. Being but a poor target, I managed to evade his shafts, and I arrived at the hotel in Ulvik, unscathed.

CHAPTER XV

Ulvik

I RANG the door bell exactly at midnight. A melancholy voice floated down from the balustrade above, demanding the nature of my errand. I answered that I was in quest of a place to sleep, upon which there appeared a light, then the patter of slippered feet, and finally the person herself, who was none other than the daughter of the proprietor of the hotel set to watch the arrival of belated guests. She held the taper above the hotel register, indicated the place to sign, and while I did this she watched the scrawl assuming form and dimension. When it was finished she gave a perfectly proper feminine start, tipped the taper dangerously, and ejaculated: "Why I know that name. Might you possibly be a relative of Rev. So-and-so in Stanwood, the place where my father visited when he was in America?"

There was no weariness in her tones any longer, she was eager to know about her father's friends, and I did not keep her in suspense, realizing, also, that the world is very, very small indeed. Learning that I was own brother to that minister, she confidently used me as the means of obtaining the knowledge she desired regarding that great western country and the minister's community in particular. Publicly, rather little interest has been shown in our American doings, heretofore; but privately, especially among the country people, the interest never lags. She invited me to their home, but I had to forego the pleasure of a visit as I had mapped out my trip in

complete ignorance of this charming person and her father, who was also "ord fører" (spokesman) and school-master; otherwise here would have been an ideal place to sojourn.

Ulvik is noted in song and story as one of the favored spots of earth. Wergeland, the great Norwegian bard, sings its praises in the loftiest terms. The scene of the famous song, "The Bridal Party in Hardanger," is laid here. The fjord and the fields and wooded tracts, together with the fine array of adjacent mountains, form a scene never to be forgotten.

Going to rest that night, it was impossible for me to realize that this was the winding up of the day of that morning long ago when I sprinted to catch the train. If one wishes to live long one must crowd much into each hour; an uneventful day seems so very short to look back upon. Ordinarily, strange experiences keep me awake, but in this instance there was such a surfeit of them that I grew careless, and sailed away into the oblivion of sleep before I had time to arrange my worries.

How six o'clock could come around as quickly as it did surprised me utterly, and that anybody could have the heart to knock so rudely and disturb this bewitching rapture, this slumber of mine, I could not but resent, even though I had myself ordered it so. To get back thus into this prosaic world, even though it be in as pretty a place as Ulvik, is not appreciated at once. But by quickly adopting heroic measures, hitting the bed post, expanding the chest, forcing a draught of cold water down the throat, and yawning as much as one pleases, the process of getting awake is at last accomplished; and looking through the window at the glories outside, listen-

ing to the birds' acclaim and welcome, one is glad to be awake and alive.

The breakfast was good, but I dared not partake too freely as I had a walk of twelve miles before me, up a mountain and down again, all to be accomplished before ten, to enable me to catch the steamer at Eide. It was with reluctance that I bade good-bye to my new friends at Ulvik, but I might not tarry, as a tourist's schedule is a very exacting thing. I could change it at will and remain inactive if I chose, but that would mean many interesting fields left unexplored, and this my eagerness for sight-seeing would not brook.

The long-suffering legs were accordingly set in motion, and off I went full of rich anticipations for the coming day. It was one continual, changing show of beautiful sights throughout the entire distance as I hurried upwards, overtaking milk-wagons, goat-drivers, or other slow-moving outfits creeping along the road. I met one belligerent old woman leading a goat and airing a vituperative vocabulary which she vented upon her charge, giving me also some of its benefits as I passed. A tourist was nothing to her, but when she heard my name she grew interested at once, forgot her goat, and expatiated upon the ability and prowess of one Reiar Tjørenaglin, as she called him, who hailed from my father's birth-place. He had been known all over this region, she said, as a shrewd trader and manager. The sailors of Hardanger nearly always dropped anchor as they passed Tjernagel, where he lived, to make a sale or purchase or pause for other purposes in Tjernagel haven. I felt highly flattered at the mention and discovery to me of this distant connection, and she grew visibly proud at being the lucky informant. She would

have spent an hour with me, but neither I nor the goat desired it. Norwegians love such wayside visits, tarry indefinitely, and tear themselves away with great reluctance.

I dodged chance encounters as much as possible after this, knowing that if I was to reach my destination in time, I must make all possible haste. But to hurry along on such a quiet, lazy morning was so utterly out of place that it was with the greatest difficulty I could induce myself to begin the race. Upon overtaking an ordinary, sane pedestrian, I learned that I was not moving half fast enough if I cared to reach such and such a place in the required time. I needed just such a spur to make me cease from loitering. A more strenuout walk it has never been my pleasure to indulge in. I ran across an old woman drinking coffee in a semi-saeter hut, and she was so struck by my unkempt and heated appearance that she forgot her occupation and could only stammer inanities in answer to my demand for a short-cut down the mountain-side. At last understanding what was desired of her, she tried to give the needed directions, but I gathered that the path was so indistinct that I might get lost and land nowhere, least of all in Eide. As I could not make myself look any other way I left her with a scowl, while the poor woman looked guilty, and all this ado was for nothing. Having reached the top, I ran when nobody was looking, feeling, meanwhile very, very foolish. I glimpsed the beautiful world about me through the mists of perspiration arising before the eyes, and regretted my hurry, resolving that I would hereafter time my marches in a more rational tempo and allow myself more leisure for sightseeing.

I stopped in once place, regardless of consequences,

to view a spot made interesting to me by association during a trip some years before. At this time a Swedish student and myself had traversed this very same place in the opposite direction, and it was here that we met half a dozen English ladies coming along in single file a rod or so apart and, as it proved, on pretty mischief bent. My friend the Swede, like all well-bred Swedes, was nothing if not polite. Upon passing the first lady he lifted his cap and made a sweeping bow, nearly grazing the ground in the noble performance. The lady, not used to such obeisance in the wilds, was actually startled and forgot herself, walking stiffly on without even nodding in return. Our man, nothing daunted, repeated the action, but the next lady came prepared and recognized the effort, but seemed to find it impossible to smother a dimple or two. The third one greeted him with undisguised mirth, so did the fourth, and all the rest; but, he, being a born aristocrat and bred a gentleman to the bone, remained grave as a judge, carrying out the program unflinchingly and with equal grace to the end. The face of the last lady was pitiful to see, for it was all torn between suppressed laughter and tears, the latter being, however, luckily, not caused by any sort of sorrow. At the close I felt like expostulating, but remembered suddenly that I had adopted another ridiculous extreme, having done nothing but gape; hence said nothing; nor did he.

I would fain have lingered here indefinitely, indulging in retrospective mirth, but time was flying and so must I; which I did, and faster than ever. I had determined not to make another halt; but when the beautiful district of Eide, basking on its greenish slopes with picturesque mountains beyond and the lovely fjord be-

Drawing by E. Biørn.

Gallantry in the mountains.

neath, burst upon my view, I involuntarily stopped short and gazed enraptured at the scene. Nothing could be finer, I thought, and even if there were, this was fine enough. Each place retains its own charm, not borrowed from another. Some tourists are, I think, apt to be quite too coldblooded in their valuation of scenery, which moves me again to say: Let each place be considered by itself without killing its individuality by cool, calculating, mathematical comparison.

Upon reaching sea-level the road became wide and smooth, having adapted itself thus in deference to the extra traffic imposed upon it here. I might not run upon it for fear of arousing alarm among the passers-by, but I performed the most effective walking "stunts" of which I was capable. Many a one I met hungered for a chat, and for a chance to find out something about me; but it was no use talking, I had to be excused this time, and reached the landing place much too early — yes with a full twenty minutes to spare. I felt sorry for those inquisitive persons trudging on back there on the road, puzzling their heads about me, for I could so easily have spared the time to enlighten them as to the cause of my haste had I but been previously assured of those extra minutes. I rested most deliciously; I could not have obtained such delightful sensations in a more deliberate way, this being the only course to take to earn such reward. I was stared at for being an American, however, and as I was in a peculiar mood, I resented it; for was I not of their own blood and features? What if our fare had not been unmixed with cornbread and our clothes could not boast of being homespun? Perhaps I was somewhat different, but how they could immediately find me out remained ever a mystery. I hon-

estly tried to do as they did, but the result was unsatisfactory.

The little steamer accommodatingly lowered its gang-plank to receive passengers and freight, all in seeming inextricable confusion; but I at last disentangled myself from the chaotic mass and was soon seated at a table forward, among a crowd of rural folk. There were several very modest-looking old men seated near, and I contrived to shift my position so as to join their circle. I imagined that they were delegates to some church gathering or other. They were splendid talkers. Their mastery of idiom and their eccentricities of speech were delightful. They knew numberless sayings and proverbs, which they applied now and then with telling effect. Being familiar with their dialect, it was a rare treat for me to listen to them. In fact, nowhere is language of any kind so aptly used as in the rural districts when handled by clever manipulators unspoiled by outside influences. I had half an hour of continuous delight, but imagine my consternation and horror when these old "grave-diggers" suddenly took to swearing "blue streaks" at something that particularly stirred their feelings and demanded the employment of stronger expressions. I could not believe my own ears, but as one explosion followed another and there appeared to be material for more, I could not deny the evidence of my senses and was obliged to set down these sanctimonious, silver haired veterans as masters in profanity. The air suddenly grew thick and oppressive, and I hurried up on deck, fearing to remain in the inferno beneath. Why did we not warn them? If they had fallen overboard no doubt we should all have jumped to their rescue; but now that they were galloping recklessly into soul-

jeopardy, searing and burning others as they went, none dared raise a voice in protest. Our moral courage was at very low ebb. Oh for an excuse to be out of it, and away from the upbraidings of our consciences! A word of warning, tendered in love, would no doubt have met with a response in the spirit it was given.

There were scarcely any houses to be seen near the shore-line as we drew on towards Eidsfjord, the scenery here somewhat resembling parts of Sognefjord, though perhaps not quite so precipitous and bare. As a whole, the district of Hardanger shows greater variety of scenery than can be found anywhere in the country within an equal area. Among other attractions the great waterfalls for which I now was bound, enhance the general effect and draw hither a great number of tourists.

We disembarked at Eidsfjord at two o'clock in the afternoon, and upon hearing that one might view Vøringsfos and return that same day, I immediately struck out, and as usual, afoot. A large party of English tourists, with drivers, started out also at the same time and from the same place. They left me on the trot and I felt lonesome, just then. Before reaching the fall there is an incline continuing for several miles, and upon reaching this, imagine my surprise when I not only overtook the whole procession, but passed them all, and had viewed the fall from all points before the laggards appeared, with their ponies hanging their heads as if ashamed.

The falls are hidden away at the termination of a deep, sinuous valley, where it comes to a sudden stop and surprises the river into taking a mighty leap, forming in the act Vøringsfos. To see such a mass of water tossed helplessly in air gives one a feeling of awe

as the eye follows its flight and contemplates its dreadful downward drop of many hundred feet. It was encompassed by perpendicular granite walls, thousands of feet high, these continuing along the valley, following its circuitous course. Though standing several hundred feet from it, the fall kept its spray circling about us, and the faces of the surrounding rocks forever bathed in tears. The eyes became very moist, and whether it was produced from humidity within or without, cannot be determined; but surely I was much moved by the wondrous spectacle. Shall we ever fully appreciate the import of its message?

After a short rest I started back, hoping to remain ahead of the caravan returning to Eidsfjord, so as to avoid swallowing all the dust I knew those two hundred Englishmen would raise when they came flying down grade. But I did not succeed. Seventy-nine vehicles claimed the right-of-way, and I, being a pedestrian, was pushed aside and left to inhale the dust that their ponies spitefully turned up and flung at me as they sped by. With the eightieth carriage, ten o'clock at night, I made my entrance into town, shoulder to shoulder, unbeaten. The distance both ways was twenty-two miles.

It occurred to me to ask some farmers living in the vicinity what they thought about the waterfall, upon which they surprised me by saying cheerfully and unblushingly that they had never seen it. This reminded me of a similar incident occurring in Egypt. After I had climbed the Pyramids, I was told that the Khedive and many others living near by had never taken the trouble to climb them. I have since asked myself: Have I, and many others well known to me, who were born and raised in the same vicinity, ever taken much

trouble to view the wonders of the mighty Father of Waters, flowing by our doors, or other interesting sights near our thresholds? "Distance lends enchantment."

The next morning found me aboard a boat again, and anything more delightful than these short steamer trips in the beautiful fjords of Hardanger can scarcely be imagined. The tourists from foreign parts are usually quiet and well-bred folk, intent on making the most of the scenery; and the other passengers, the natives, are generally equally modest and reserved, there being seldom any bluster, bombast or braggadocio in their bearing. Our profane companions of yesterday, though representing no inconsiderable class, do not belong to the majority. I could almost imagine how it feels to be a great man when I was among these people, for all deemed it an honor to converse with the American. It was my privilege to open and close all interviews quite according to my fancy. How easily may we not grow inconsiderate and selfish under such circumstances! There was much to see as well as much to hear during our erratic cruise in and out the bays, the inlets and fjordlets, but to tell of it is one thing, and to enjoy and experience it another—and better.

CHAPTER XVI

The Wonders of the Waterfalls

I WAS landed in the afternoon at Tysso, which marks the beginning of the road leading to the great Skjäggedals fos, considered by many to be the grandest in Norway. I walked up the incline in the company of an old contractor from Voss who commented most intelligently on the building industry in the kingdom. Because of the great supply of building material the people of former years had been prodigal and wasteful in its use, while now they were becoming fully awake to its value and scarcity. The old-fashioned barns contained enough mammoth logs to build structures of five times their dimensions, and equally well. And many of the houses, even though clapboarded, ceiled and wainscoted, had logs hidden away in the walls. Owing to the increasing call for lumber and the lack of supply caused by forest depletion, sawed lumber is coming more and more into use, and somewhat cheaper and flimsier building methods adopted. Artistically considered, many of the moderately expensive frame houses of Norway compare very favorably with ours. There it little of ostentation and display, but the pretty verandas and the rather widely overlapping tile or slate roofs give a fine effect.

We could scarcely hear each other's voices as we walked along, the water in the raging stream (Tysso river) having evidently gone mad from its 800-foot fall at Skjäggedals fos. These Norwegian mountain streams are the most unruly of any in the world, I verily believe.

To attempt to describe them adequately would be futile. They must be seen as well as heard to be appreciated.

We appeared at the hotel situated on Skjäggedals lake after a strenuous, lung-expanding walk of one and one-half hours. The outlet of this lake has been dammed up several feet, enormously increasing the holding capacity of its basin. Otherwise it would be likely to run dry in winter. Two two-foot pipes many miles in length lead downward, conveying water and furnishing power to drive the dynamos below. We saw where the water entered ever so quietly into the pipes, and contrasted it with the fearful hubbub and racket it causes at the other end, among the generators, and their child, the great electrically driven factory in Odda, six miles distant. It was an inspiring yet weird sight to see these huge pipes twining in and out serpent-like among the mountains, carrying their burden of terrific force so silently and unostentatiously along. The farmer who happened to own the river-outlet, the lake and the fos (falls) may be said to have struck a gold-mine when the power plant was installed. He need not worry for a living any more. Yet I was told that the concessions were obtained ridiculously cheap. But why should he be paid such a very stiff price? To him alone, as he previously sat there, the whole stupendous water-power was worth, so to speak, absolutely nothing; but to the world, when harnessed, its value can hardly be estimated.

The son and heir of the lucky farmer ferried me across the lake in his motor-boat for two crowns. It took us a half-hour to reach the falls. His father and mother and sister and a girl from Voss were making hay near by, and these he joined, leaving me, absent-mindedly, to get lost among the stones or anywhere else I

might prefer. It may be surmised that henceforth he saw only the black-eyed one from the north.

Some remarkable cataclysm in nature had taken place here as in so many other places visited, in that millions of rock fragments lay scattered in my way, so that it was very difficult to come near the falls. Yet I climbed till the spray dashed cold on my face, and my clothes glistened from the tiny specks of moisture, appearing as if bedecked with pearls. The main body of water fell, a placid blue, over the brink, but soon stretched into flimsy shreds, turning whiter and whiter as it fell. Dense columns of a darker hue came bounding from above, piercing the whitish mass, being apparently heavier than the other. As the water dashed into the seething caldron below, masses of foam arose with incredible swiftness, reaching out in various directions and partaking of all imaginable shapes and motions.

To be within a hairbreadth of being swallowed up makes a sensitive person feel queer, or rattled, or — yes, alarmed, and sometimes downright scared. The moment one cannot remain calm, but becomes thus possessed, it is well to hurry away from the beckoning arms, the calling voices; dizziness or faintness is generally nigh. I gazed my fill, but turned to look again and again at this wonder, seemingly brought into being by the merest accident, just an irregularity among the rocks serving to produce it. At thought of this I realized more fully how pregnant with possibilities everything about us may be.

The twin falls, Tyssestrengene, situated a couple of miles or so from Skjäggedalsfos, are remarkable not so much for size as for their great similarity to each other. They look very nearly alike and fall several hundred feet straight down, and are but a very short distance

apart. They attract the attention of all comers and are considered by some quite as interesting as the great fall itself.

As we left the fos and were puffing along the lake in our little motor-boat I discovered, as I thought, a flock of birds high up the mountain-side and inaccessible, as it seemed, to any creature without wings. After further scrutiny it developed that they were nothing but goats; remarkable birds indeed had they borne wings. They seem to place no weight on the value of existence, looking upon danger with serene indifference; they walk, jump or slide from rock to rock with apparent abandon, regarding the precipices and awful depths in reckless abstraction. They are after the grass, and nearly always get it without troubling themselves about the scenery. There are nearly 300,000 of them in Norway. But owing to their depredations among growing trees and their obnoxious ways otherwise, they are getting to be unpopular and are in some districts being told to leave.

Late that night, at about one o'clock, I reached Odda by steamer, having embarked at Tysso a couple of hours earlier. Tall mountains hem in the place, looking down rather frowningly from their lofty positions. The mighty Folgefond marches by on the right, meeting the blue above, and in its immaculate robe of white looking very far removed from earth. I wanted to cross it the first thing in the morning, but no guides being available I found it foolhardy to attempt it alone. I could scarcely contain myself, being enthralled by its grandeur and lofty repose. I would fain have mounted and explored its vast silent halls, but circumstances being thus unfavorable, I was obliged to enjoy it as best I might from below. It sends a feeler down to Bua which is called the

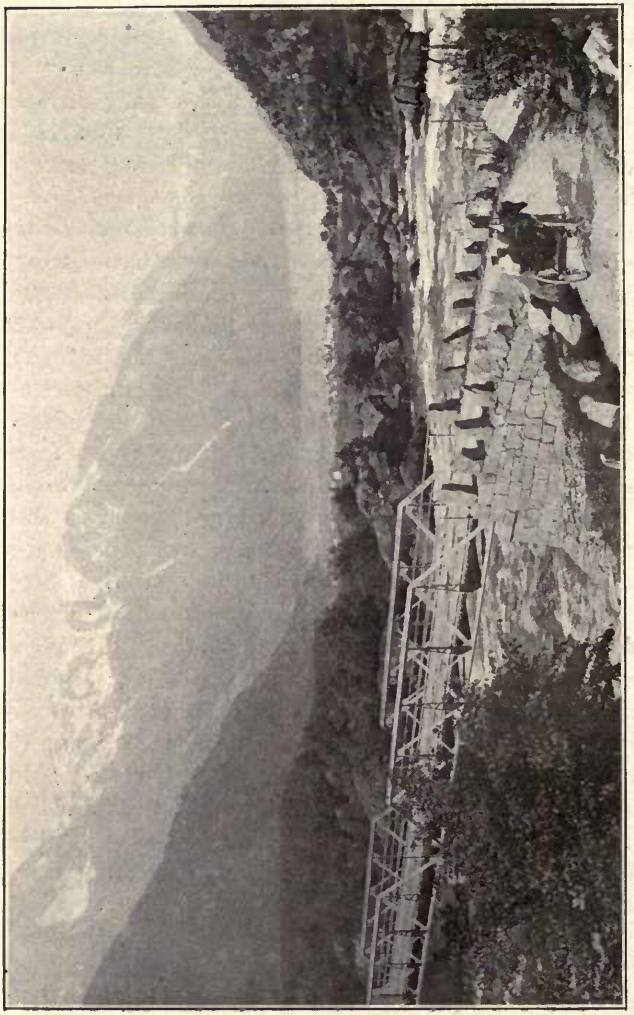


Photo by Wilse, Kristian a.

Odda, Hardanger.

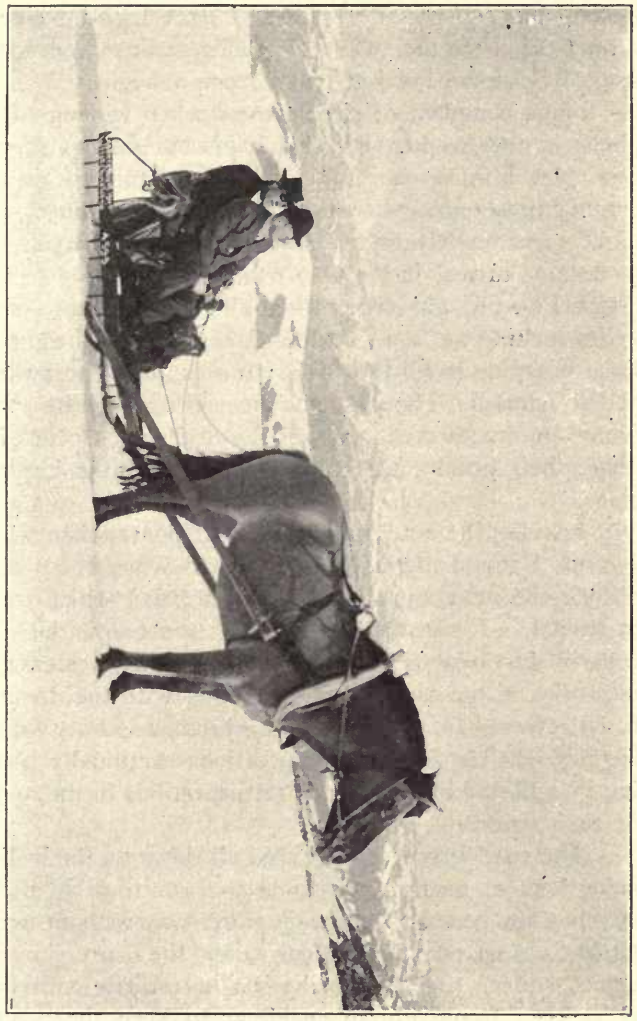
Buar-brä, and this I visited and was greatly impressed. It reaches down to within a few hundred feet above sea level, adjacent fields of ripened grain edging up to the very mouth of the glacier. It is said that where the great drift now sits was formerly a populated valley; and in proof of this it is claimed that household articles have come to light in the dirty stream spewed out of the glacier's mouth. But few really believe it to have been a fact, though the story is tenaciously clung to and oft repeated, generation after generation. The glacier arm at Bua never remains quiet, but pushes gradually lower, displacing mighty boulders and sparing nothing in its resistless course. The glacier mouth from which the stream gushes out is fantastically formed, the slowly thawing, corrugated, highly fissured mass showing both horns and teeth in its extremity. A Danish journalist and I started to climb it, but were so awed by its frightful countenance that we grew quite hysterically inclined before we were again safely away from it.

Odda has several hundred inhabitants and is a thrifty place, owing its thrift largely to the tourist traffic and still more, perhaps to the employment of many of the people in the carbide factories. The German emperor very frequently touched at this point on his visits to Norway.

The people here had a more worldly-wise look than is usually noted in the more isolated districts. They glanced at the stranger rather more brazenly, but with less curiosity. Ordinarily, however, the people in the average Norwegian town are a good-naturedly curious lot. When they see a stranger they look him over familiarly, taking their time to do so and appear not at all abashed if caught in the act. Even in the larger places

strangers are scrutinized rather closely — so much so that when arriving at Copenhagen and the German and French cities, I remember slightly resenting being so entirely overlooked, never being noticed at all. There the stranger is lost in the general throng, while Norway, lying well out of the way of the great transcontinental traffic must needs sit up and notice all her guests.

From Odda to Seljestad I walked most of the way without the usual accompaniment of raging rivers, but had Folgefond, performing at its best in the shifting hues of morning, noon and night, continually on my right. There was a gradual ascent, and bits of pretty scenery were continually appearing and disappearing. And I never grew tired of turning to look at the panorama behind as it grew and expanded, becoming finally so extensive that it required too long a time altogether to give to it its full meed of appreciation. The curving road hid me altogether away, at times, till I grew fearful as to the outcome, but unexpectedly there would open vistas of glory all unannounced, to lift up my spirits and to reassure me in my path-finding instinct. Thus would come to view my much admired panorama from the north, again and again, to cheer me on, Folgefond, meanwhile, keeping certain step and from her sun-kissed crest smiling benignly down. When I finally reached a certain eminence, or height of land, away up among the clouds, the path imperceptibly let me down, and upon my turning to enjoy again my favorite view, lo and behold! it was gone, and there was nothing but the tiniest speck on the bald-headed top of my dear old drift to be seen. It made me very lonesome, and I had no desire whatever to court a new favorite in the mood I was then in. Besides, it was growing late and I was obliged to hasten,



"Folgefonden"

Drawing by E. Biorn.

looking but superficially at what I passed, and arriving a bit tired after my twenty-five mile walk at the door-step of Seljestad hotel at nine o'clock at night.

Some complain of sleeplessness when wooing Morpheus in the heights, but this happened seldom in my case; yet I must own to visiting the strangest dream country imaginable, at times, and not the least during the night spent at Seljestad. I dreamt of endless roads, of mountains turned inside out, with roots reaching to the South Pole; of glaciers cracked all to pieces and snow-drifts melting as fast as snow flakes, and the resulting flood hurrying to fill the voids. It was all so mysterious and wonderful. Though consciousness seems quite apart from our dream creations, yet the brain must needs indulge their pranks and the memory retain the impressions.

Leaving the hotel merely a dollar poorer than when I came, I found myself in good spirits when about nine o'clock the next morning, I took the road which leads to Røldal. I soon busied myself as usual in looking eagerly for new sights and storing away yesterday's memories in the same drawer together with the dreams, to be referred to at leisure. The brain was busy building new shelves for fresh impressions continually pouring in, and had little time for retrospections in the midst of such work.

The road is carefully graded all the way, the incline being kept as nearly as possible at a comfortable angle, enabling the pedestrian to walk either way without much effort. As we near the Røldal valley, the depression becomes sudden and the road must necessarily turn and twist very frequently to enable it to keep the proper incline. Its sinous course suggested a huge yellow ser-

pent streching as if to plunge its forked tongue into the cool, shimmering fjord below. There was a short-cut right across, one good enough to use a hundred years ago, and this I ventured out upon so as to avoid some of the distance of the wagon road I saw tourists on wheels spinning down and onwards several hundred rods ahead, but pursuing my bee-line I soon trippingly passed them, leaving them sadly in the rear and with long faces.

Arrived in the vicinity of Breifond Hotel, I overtook two little tots, black of face and hands, who were picking and eating blueberries. We regarded each other with mutual surprise. I could not help laughing, which they did not quite understand, but finally their faces broke into little smiles, which made them, bedaubed as they were, funnier still. Upon my asking them if I was still in Hardanger, they answered after much deliberation: "No, you are in Norway now."

Norway could furnish the world with blueberries if only the price made it worth while to pick them. There are thousands and thousands of square miles of unbroken highland where, save for the intrusion of a few modest cows, some sheep and goats, berries of various kinds grow unmolested in great quantities. The 170,000 Norwegian deer scattered throughout the country, and especially towards the north, feed mostly on mountain moss, eating no berries, so far as I know. Birds, of which there are many, no doubt eat them. The ptarmigan is the greatest game bird of Norway and attracts numerous hunters abroad, and he surely does not hold himself too good to partake of the feast so plentifully spread before him. Insects are not so numerous in these regions as with us; hence the song birds as well as the

game birds—there are lap-wings, plover, teal, snipe, loon — must make the most of what is given them, though they agree with all other birds that the little bug and the fat worm are the most delectable bird-fare in all the world. We boys on the farm always had an idea that snakes liked strawberries; here, the snakes are few, but not without venom, and it is not at all likely that they obtain their poisonous secretion from so sweet a fruit. The mountain strawberry has a peculiarly rich flavor. There are no katydids, or few, if any, insects that make noises at night — how I missed them during harvest time! — and thus the grass and the berries grow safe and secure from such enemies. There is scarcely a house-fly, but many a fierce long-legged mosquito with a pitch-fork in its mouth; but as these like best to suck blood, berries and fruit generally are unmolested by them. There are not a few rabbits, but no skunks, and there might be a billion rabbits and yet the berries would show no sign of their depredations. Nature is lavish in her waste, producing much that appears not to be needed, while the poor farmer is not able, by far, to coax forth the amount of grain necessary for home consumption, large amounts having to be shipped in from other countries. The area given over to the mountain wastes and the practically barren highlands exceeds the cultivated soil and uplands many times over. The mountain wilds, consisting largely of snow, bogs, glaciers and lakes, where scarcely anything grows except moss, constitute nearly two-thirds of the area of the country, which is 124,500 square miles in all. Of woodland there are 26,000 square miles. Though the snow and ice territory is apparently more useless than the berry region, it is a very valuable asset for it is the seat of unlimited

power possibilities and, as already mentioned, promises in the future to make Norway perhaps the greatest available power source in the world.

The little toddlers grew to like me, it seemed, for they quit their present occupation and undertook to be my guides although I had hardly expressed any such desire regarding them. But although it proved that I was the better guide myself, I accepted their company with much pleasure; and forbore to make remark. They told me that their mamma was the nicest person they had seen, but that she did not like to have them take these long berry-hunting trips because they might fall and get hurt, and, besides, it meant a great deal of patching for her to do on stocking-heels, knees, and other places behind and before. They had promised to be extra good today, which, however, their toilettes sadly belied. The darlings would prove rather tough specimens for the weary mother to make clean and tidy. They told me that she was that day storing up a supply of peat from the peatbog in the valley below. They had little else to cook with, they said. Their father was the biggest man they knew of and such a great workman that he could go out and make from fifty to seventy-five cents a day, with which he would buy flour, clothes and such stuff to take home with him. There were eleven children, and if there was not anything else, there was always good rye mush and sour milk to eat. They thought they had it very nice, they said. God bless them, so they had. We parted to the clattering accompaniment of their little wooden shoes, which clung to their feet in the most marvellous manner, held in place chiefly by their toes.

As I neared Breifond Hotel an excellent view of

Røldal and its lake was had in the direction of Haukelid mountains, where lies the famous Haukelid saeter. Many tourists seek this place, though perhaps not quite so numerously now as formerly. Many cross the mountains by this route. Whether it was a Mrs. Oilwells or Coppermine, I cannot say, but not so very long ago the road was blockaded by vast snowslides, which was deemed very unfortunate by the lady in question, for she wanted to pass just where that snow lay. The road waited to be opened up by the proper authorities, but the process seemed too slow for our fellow-citizeness with such a lot of money to spend; so she telephoned, or telegraphed, for laborers by the score, and soon the path was clear, enabling her to satisfy her whim and resume her journey a day or so earlier. The workmen were liberally paid, but what queer ideas must they not have regarding us and our inborn restlessness that cannot bide a wee, or possess itself in patience, but must resist and do battle with Nature's grandest forces for a mere whim! The Norwegians note our restless activity, our fierce struggles for wealth and power, with great calm, without jealousy, knowing full well that we are paying quite too dearly for our whistles. But mark again: when these quiet, deliberate persons embark for our shores they soon catch our spirit and become just as aggressive seekers for plums as the rest.

CHAPTER XVII

At Botten and Elsewhere

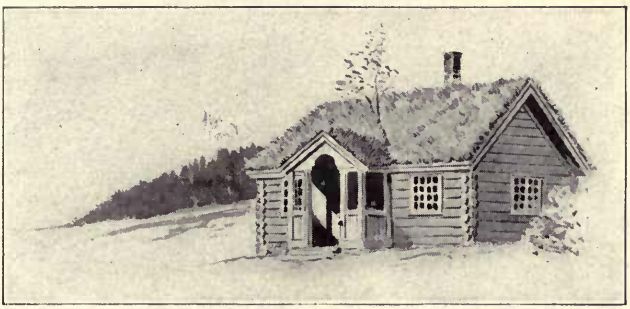
AFTER a bite of bread and cheese and a cheerful chat with the buxom lady manager, I left the pretty Breifond Hotel, so cosily set on its hill, to make the trip to Botten, which I could see glimpses of at the end of the south arm of the lake. I found it warm walking, however, this August day, on the edge of the temperate zone in the far north. I kept to the white, dusty road curving along the lake on the right, with the mountains so placed as to assist in the bombardment of the sun's rays on my head — an unexpected trial of my endurance. Though accustomed to heat at home, one naturally resents its tagging along here where, according to the map, it has no right to be. Yet, as we know, some warmth there must be for the ripening of crops, though it be not necessarily Indian corn. The latter takes root and makes a good beginning in this land of the midnight sun, but its performance is a miserable failure at the end. The Norwegians are happy and satisfied when there is sufficient warmth and sunlight to ripen the small grain properly. There are seldom any really hot days. Americans generally complain of the moderateness of the midsummer warmth in Norway, and are very often seen with overcoats on their backs and a tinge of blue on face and hands.

Arrived at Botten, I took note of the rather small, rudely built dwellings, and wondered how the people here could gain sustenance on the little stretches of soil

casually left over at the base of the mountains and so nearly engulfed by the sea. Judging by the dwellings, one would say it was a very poor community, but no one I met complained that it was an unhappy one. To us who are used to much lavish waste, and who neglect hundreds of thousands of acres of valuable ground by the roadside, along our fences, and elsewhere, it might serve as a lesson and an admonition to alter our ways, when we view the pitifully small farms of these industrious, hardy folk. There were patches no longer than a floor, perched precariously on stony ledges and filled with potato-beds or thickly growing grain. Owing to their intensive methods of cultivation their yield is much greater than ours, acre for acre. We are inclined to criticize at first, and no doubt some American push could be used to advantage here as elsewhere; but I am afraid that if an American were expected to make good under precisely the same conditions as some of these least favored ones have to contend with, he would give up the task as hopeless. Though they are poor, these people have good schools; there is no illiteracy, the destitutes are well provided for, and the church, being supported by the state, offers all its advantages even to the meanest comer. The climate is good, the scenery fine, and their simple life conducive to health; then why should not these people be as happy as any? They are.

As I took the road along the river that had just escaped from the lake, I noted a house with heavy sods for a roof, where a small birch tree had taken root and was swaying gayly back and forth, furnishing a shield from the sun immediately above the doorstep. The baby played there, and the young mother flitted in and out the door, the two, in combination with their

oddly ornamented dwelling and the rich setting of surrounding scenery, forming a truly idyllic picture. As I walked on along the river bank there was, to my surprise hardly any sound from the water, its bed being comparatively smooth, causing scarcely a murmur to reach me. It was clear as crystal, inviting a plunge into its pure, cool depths. It is one of the few placid, easy-going streams of Norway, though near its mouth it cuts capers to surprise one, doing also the same before entering Røldal lake.



Drawing by E. Biorn.

Birch tree growing on sod-roofed house.

There were but few homes in the narrow Bratland valley, the mountains being inhospitable, unwilling to support anything upon their smooth, black sides, and but little at their bases. Some little birches had secured foothold here and there, but were unwelcome and could not thrive in such uncongenial surroundings. The mountains had sleek, black sides, some mighty cataclysm, it is reasonable to suppose, having at some epoch or other brushed away the roughness. As I drew near the mouth

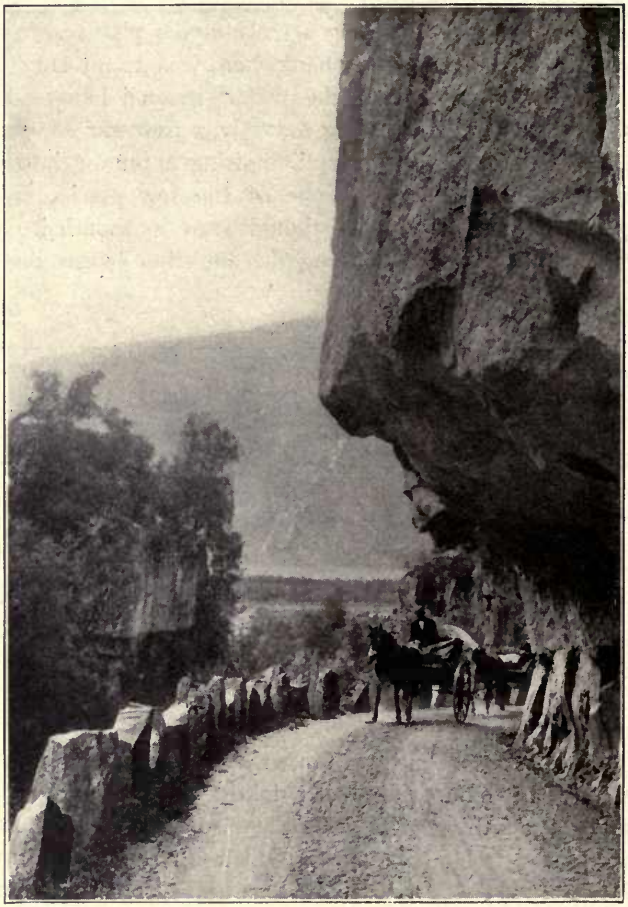


Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

"Bratlandsdalen"

of the valley I grew afraid, the river suddenly taking frightful jumps and plunges, induced thereto by the indescribable roughness of its small bed squeezed into unmercifully narrow limits by the pushing, overbearing cliffs. The roadway became inextricably tangled up in the midst of it all, and seemed forever butting up against some impassible barrier, yet had a habit of climbing over, or out from under, or passing by, that which would hinder its passage. In places it seemed like entering tombs or subterranean crypts, while the swish and turmoil of furiously rushing water in the adjacent narrow gorges sang a somber strain. I held grimly to the pass, scarcely daring to take a look around where the road edged near a precipice most daringly, or where the roar and hubbub echoed most appallingly. I could not imagine how vehicles could pass each other till I noticed niches hewn out in the rock wall, for this very purpose. By and by the gorge widened, the road found its way more easily, and it was not long before I came upon an opening where I saw spread before me the Nes flats bordering on an elbow of the beautiful Suldal lake.

After having walked twenty-five miles that day it was indeed a pleasing sensation, and one rarely gained in any other way, to sit down and rest, enjoying also at the same time, with fullest appreciation, a meal. And it was as if the other senses had been stimulated, for never had my ear more eagerly caught musical sounds than when it received those rendered now so harmoniously, — a beautifully executed piano solo in an adjoining parlor There must be a certain pause between our meals allowing the proper need and a certain zest to be developed, to enjoy them; and so it is, also, to a certain extent, with music. When we are away from it for awhile we

acquire a veritable hunger for it, and when it drops thus unexpectedly on ears famished for want of it, it sinks deep into our inner consciousness, acting as a splendid medicine both for soul and body. No wonder that Luther placed beautiful song and music next after theology as the strongest power to uplift and revivify sunken spirits. Mere snatches of song have turned the currents of men's lives. The melody that floated out from that parlor remains with me still; it glorified the hour and stamped itself and the scene in my memory forever.

The bell had rung, the gang-plank had been removed, and we were actually under way when a long, lank figure shot as if from a catapult into our very midst on deck, scattering us like a flock of geese, and causing a sort of pandemonium. It was a young seminary student who had raced since four o'clock in the afternoon to perform the very stunt now completed. He was deluged with perspiration and could not talk for some minutes on account of his rapid breathing. He was on his vacation and loved to cover the countryside in just such manner, having this time out-distanced many a horse. But he was none the worse for wear, and proved to be an interesting companion during the night. In America such walking trips, though a most splendid form of recreation and exercise, are well-nigh unknown, while here all classes indulge in them to a greater or lesser extent. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why their complexions are so much better, generally, than with us.

We passed through Suldals-porten which is a narrow gateway in the lake where the rocks rise sheer several hundred feet on both sides, scarcely more than a stone's

throw distant, to right and left. An old-timer told me that within his memory the upper shelf on the south promontory had slid perceptibly, he surmising that the passage was not without danger. In event of this section suddenly falling into the sea while a boat was crawling by, the tremendous wave that it would cause would heave the flimsy craft, even a steamer, to destruction with terrific swiftness. Once a schooner of Northern Norway was caught by such a wave, but was, luckily, thrown high and dry upon the open land missing the rocks and destruction by a mere hair's breadth.

Upon landing at Osen, at the end of the lake, about ten o'clock, my seminary friend and I sought each other out and clung together, not wishing to be parted in the gloom by the merry, good natured loungers about the wharf. As we were both bound for Sand and eventually Stavanger, we hired a skydskarl together, halved the expenses, and supplied each other with company. The road was perfect and the scenery pretty, but from ten to twelve on a moonless night in August it is dark enough to make impossible any satisfactory sight-seeing. As the mantle of night hid from us the charms of nature, we found solace in singing and conversation. As I happened to be familiar with the greater part of the popular Norwegian airs I was able to take part, though not more than hum a modest accompaniment to his splendid tenor. No country in the world has a richer collection of folk-melodies than Norway, and no wonder that such an intensely loyal partriot as I found my companion to be should sing out his very heart and soul on a lovely night like this. "Ja vi elsker," (Yes we love with fond devotion) rang out over hill and dale as never before; the echo from the distant hills rebounded countlessly and was

finally borne softly back on the wings of the night, barely audible. The singing and all nature's response was such that our spirits and thoughts were carried upwards, and it became my privilege to listen to much good preachment, though not intentionally delivered as such.

My companion had no higher ambition than to qualify himself to impart to the youth entrusted to his charge a practical, useful education, and how to live to become good subjects, taking always for his motto "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." He told me that it had been a blessed thing for all concerned that the work of education had been carried on hand in hand with religion, and he looked with alarm at the activity of the modernists many of whom were agitating to dispense with the latter in conjunction with any and all public school work. He deplored that such a vast number of teachers had already been smitten by the new thought, giving rise to the very pernicious, merely perfunctory method or habit of imparting religious instruction in the state schools, thus developing carelessness and finally unbelief, not only in themselves but in the pupils as well. A teacher with mere knowledge, but utterly without heart in the work, especially as applied to instruction in the catechism and in biblical courses, was a menace to the community. Another cause for alarm was the fact that many of the seminaries themselves were being endangered and had actually adopted some of the havoc-working principles, and were imparting them to their pupils. He mentioned the fact that Norway had the honor of being among the first on the list of the nations in its freedom from illiteracy. Then why should we cease to employ the very agency to which

this state of things is mostly due — I mean, religious instruction in the common schools?

I asked him why he did not come to America. "Me to America! Norway needs me, and here I stay." "America," he continued, "has indeed been a good place to go to, and we appreciate what Norway's sons are doing abroad, but a great many would have done well to have remained at home, and had they applied themselves with equal assiduity, the results would show as large here as elsewhere. There are needed a great number of men to reclaim waste lands and develop our other resources, in this country, as well as in the far West. And above all, we need strong men and women to carry on the grand work of education, to disseminate useful worldy knowledge hand in hand with religious instruction, to build, uphold and strengthen everywhere, both materially and spiritually. The rewards will be large enough to the faithful." He was perfectly loyal to his own country, but from none other have I heard a fairer estimate of ours.

Just at midnight we arrived at Sand, where we speedily found most excellent quarters at the Kaarhus Hotel. To me it had been a memorable night, this young man's creed and example having profited me much in ilustrating the truth that only those who labor, not merely for themselves, but for the general good, live lives that are really worth while.

Sand is indeed a pretty place, surrounded as it is by low-lying green-crested hills, with mountains peeping from beyond a blue arm of the ocean reflecting them as in a mirror and also furnishing a haven for visiting ships. From Sand had come several estimable young

men who had settled near my home in America, and remembering what splendid addition to our community they made, I looked upon their birth-place with interested eyes. How little we realize just what it means for a country like Norway to be drained, generation after generation, of its best blood, we invariably being the gainers. It is true that considerable money is sent home by those who have gone away, but let no one imagine that it compensates for what is lost. Ask the old fathers and mothers left alone in the old homesteads but recently vibrant with exuberant life, what they think of it, of the parting, the lonesomeness, and the lack of loving support. Mere money gifts or other gifts, however liberal, can never replace the presence of the children themselves. On account of this great exodus of the young and strong, many a little farm has languished for want of attention, the bent and weary backs of the remaining elders being incapable of bearing the necessary burden of work and care. We are glad they come, these men and maids from the North; they make splendid additions to our community, but we can never appreciate too highly the magnanimity of their fathers and mothers, of their communities and the country, in surrendering them.

The steamer left early in the morning for Stavanger. We made several stops at places such as Hjelmeland, Tau, Marvig and a few more, and to my intense delight I thus came upon places where various dialects with which I was familiar had their home and origin. To hear the shadings and intonations rendered to such a nicety gave me the acutest pleasure, and I made it a point to converse with the passengers in order to draw them out, each in his own rich vernacular. They seemed to

consider it a privilege to talk with me, but seldom overstepped the limits of modesty, this excellent virtue prevailing here as elsewhere in Norway. Not only aboard the steamers, but on trains and street cars as well, I seldom heard anything in the nature of loud-mouthed ranting or cheap bravado; nor did those about me enlarge upon their private professions after the too-prevalent American fashion, but the subjects of conversation were mainly general. Especially in the cities would one often be surprised to overhear intelligent discussions on art, for instance, from those who, a little later, would perhaps don the mechanic's leather apron or the barber's coat. To such well-informed, intelligent persons their vocations were but stepping-stones to higher things in the promotion of individual and general welfare. Hence there is little talk of dollars, or private business in public.

Our road lay among numerous pretty, low-lying islands, some of them rather bare, others thickly studded with young birch. Not more than fifteen years ago many of these timbered tracts had stood practically bare, but through the judicious work of the forestry department they had now become valuable. Immense portions of the bare west coast were deforested by fires in the long ago, but the territory has not changed in other respects and the forests may some day come back, but scarcely of themselves. The forestry laws provide for considerable seeding and replanting; and no one is allowed to cut and slash indiscriminately, even on his own property; trees under a certain age must be spared.

Beyond our islands toward the west we could see the great blue ocean as it merged into the azure of the sky, and right on its rim sat a little island with a transparent

base. At least, so it seemed, and I was told that in certain kinds of weather it was no unusual sight to see distant islands lift themselves from the water and hang thus dreamily in the air. The sea plays many tricks on the eyes, providing many an optical illusion to distract, confuse, and bewilder.

Stavanger, the city of the great flats, Jäderen by name, has a population of some 38,000, a great many of whom are interested in the sea both as ship-owners, sailors, and fishermen. It may be mentioned here that Norwegian ships visit all ports, Norway as a sea-faring nation ranking fourth. Her fishermen take from the deep an annual haul of fish that averages $10,000,000 in value. The most important fisheries are those of cod and herring. Next come those of mackerel, salmon and sea-trout. Stavanger is the seat of a considerable industry in fish canning, and her factories send out millions of hermetically sealed boxes containing variously treated fish, sold and distributed all over the world.

Stavanger has almost as crooked streets as Jerusalem, and they are narrow as well. These are all in the older section of the city, however. The newer city, especially the residence portion, which is steadily extending its growth towards the open country away from the sea, is quite modern. The streets are well laid out, and the houses generally quite spacious and built according to sanitary methods, in response to the general demand for this class of dwellings. It was good to see that so many of the people preferred separate dwellings and were not content to live in flats, as the majority in Christiania and Bergen do.

When meeting people on the street, were it not for their complexions, it would not be easy, judging merely

by their garb and actions, to decide upon their nationality. This truth struck me in the cities of other European countries. Customs in dress are so much alike throughout the civilized world that, were one to drop suddenly into the midst of an unknown thoroughfare, it would take more than a passing scrutiny to decide on what continent he had landed. In the European country districts, however, the difference is quite easily seen, showing plainly both in dress and feature, vastly more so than with us.

The country people, especially, ignored the sidewalks and walked scatteringly about, choosing the middle of the street quite as often as not. This custom has its origin in the prevalence of the ancient narrow thoroughfare where there was little or no room for sidewalks, and the practice is still quite common even among city dwellers themselves. When the Norwegian student singers visited our shores, their habit of striding unconcernedly all over the street, when viewing the sights, was frequently noted.

The stranger has no difficulty in finding lodging place, for the town is literally sprinkled with little private hotels where one may sleep and eat at a trifling expense. Cleanliness was general, but fleas were not unknown. They often came with the country folk, who invariably put up at these little houses of entertainment, while the more pretentious hostleries mainly sought by tourists, were free from the pest. In these smaller establishments the patrons receive at meals a certain portion, no more and no less, for each. This is nearly always disposed of, it being considered rather bad form to order a dinner and not partake of the whole amount. It is, indeed, looked upon as a gross breach of etiquette,

especially at private tables, to help oneself so liberally of the various courses sent around that a heap of half-consumed remnants remains on the plate.

To lovers of fish these Norwegian sea-coast towns furnish a great variety and abundance of this kind of fare. The fish epicure is here in his element, and may be seen at any time gliding in and out among the market booths in eager quest of fresh delicacies newly landed. The market place is the only spot where the Norwegian really finds his voice; there both men and women assert themselves, nor are they over-fastidious as to methods of speech. It is surprising to hear how apt is their talk while driving their bargains, and how quick they are at repartee. One may enjoy hours of richest entertainment by mingling promiscuously with these merry, jostling market crowds. The middleman is here left out in the cold.

Wishing to get a view of the open country, I chose the likeliest way, following it inland, the proximity of the sea enabling me readily to get my bearings. I enjoyed that walk hugely, for it brought me back home, as it were, the level stretches of Jäderen offering no obstruction to the view, but spreading out its pretty groups of homes in a well-nigh endless panorama, reminding me of the prairies of the West. At Ullenhaug, a tower about four miles out, built to commemorate some great Viking deed or other, the view obtained was most attractive. Having quitted the mountains, I breathed my relief at being free to gaze into vast distances, on all sides, not being shut in by towering crags or cliffs. Here in the open would I tarry where I might see the majestic ocean in its varying aspects under changing winds and in alternating seasons; here I could

view hundreds of farms, far and near, and watch the interesting changes occurring week by week and month by month; and from here I could betake myself to the mountains beckoning in the east when the spirit of adventure and restlessness came upon me. A prairie-dweller, I would remain where the firmament above reaches out in fullest glory, and where inspiration fetches to the very skies.

From my tower I could see an ancient battle-ground (Hafrsfjord) where had been fought one of the decisive battles of the kingdom. The ocean rolled vast and unbroken beyond, providing no harbors, albeit, a rich territory for the wrecker. In ancient times it is said coast-scavengers tied lanterns to the tails of their horses and let them loose, hoping thus to lure vessels to destruction. Then there were no light-houses, but now the shore-line is literally dotted with them. Such safeguards rob sea-going of many of its terrors; yet wrecks are not infrequent.

Oats, barley, rye and potatoes are raised. The quite spacious meadows are largely given over to pasture, to clover and timothy, which furnish fodder for the cattle and make possible a considerable dairy industry in this district. There are still large areas of wild heather which have little value but are gradually being subdued, the stone being removed for fences and the dormant soil coaxed into usefulness by thorough cultivation and a liberal, yearly application of fertilizer. Surprisingly large returns are obtained through such intensive methods of cultivation. The farms are small, yet with good management they are made to return no inconsiderable profit. Though much modern machinery has been introduced in eastern Norway the limited size of the farms

here on the west coast and further inland renders it impracticable to bring in this machinery on an extensive scale, hand-labor being still much in vogue, as of old. The homes are neat and attractive, their roofs of a cheerful red, tiles taking the place of shingles, while the outside walls are rarely unpainted. The yards are clean and free from litter, every square foot serving some useful end, with no room for unsightly waste.

CHAPTER XVIII

By Steamer to Haugesund

I LEFT Stavanger one evening at seven, by the steamer "Kristiania," for Haugesund, some forty miles distant. The harbor at Stavanger lies well protected from the onslaught of the open sea by the protecting arms of the sinuous coast line; but no sooner were we beyond their shelter, than the waves set us dancing a lively jig. As we crossed the Buknfjord, which opens wide into the very maw of the North sea, many of the passengers were suddenly attacked by seasickness. I tried to ignore it, but was stricken with the rest.

Long live the isle of Karten! As we slipped into the lea of its protecting arm the fish-soup that had been assailing my nostrils so disagreeably till now, gradually ceased to exicte my disgust, the people grew more amiable and ghosts of smiles ventured forth on many austere countenances. Something ridiculously funny occurred which but a short time before would have raised, not mirth, but wrath. Karten is a long, narrow, cultivated island which keeps the ocean from tumbling in upon the mainland, and provides a narrow strait or channel for the quiet passage of vessels that have breasted the boisterous fjords at either end. As we passed by Kopervik I was seized with a wish that I might again hear dear old grandmother tell of her experiences while employed about the copper mines situated here. But she was dead these twenty years, and I could but sigh my

regret at not having noted down more of her story when there was yet opportunity. As with many another, my enthusiasm for storing such reminiscences, was too late in the forming.

We arrived at Haugesund at ten o'clock the same evening and landed midst an enthusiastic, eager-looking crowd of people that gave us a most thorough scrutiny as we came on shore. So eloquent was their stare that I felt that I should be deeply missed upon leaving the place. We charged right through the thick of the bombardment and soon came to a noisy hotel, Victoria, by name. I asked for a quieter place, but was told that the hotels of Haugesund were scarcely any of them first-class concerns, being run rather on the happy-go-lucky plan, their constituencies being drawn from all classes, including the most humble. Hence such any every-day, bustling, unrefined air; it did not seem like Norway. I spent the night in bedlam, listening to hurryings and scurryings, chatterings and jabberings, till finally, toward morning, I yielded to an overpowering lethargy, which scouted at mere noise, and held me in its embrace till the light of another day had grown old about me.

Haugesund has attained its present proportions within the memory of some of its older inhabitants. Its rapid growth is mainly due to the increase of the fisheries at Røvär, Sira and adjacent points, also to a considerable sea traffic, many vessels hailing from here as well as a large number of seamen.

The town has no aristocracy, its inhabitants having mostly drifted in from neighboring country districts, carrying their gait and general characteristics with them, and with the rural atmosphere still about them. The place has no well-defined language of its own, the va-

rious dialects, although not greatly differing, not having blended sufficiently to make one certain, set form of speech, as for instance, Bergenese. Like all towns of quick growth Haugesund has gone through its period of crashes, financial and other, but has now settled down to solid, steady development. The houses, which are mostly of two stories, are generally of wood. Some of the newer structures are being built of stone, brick, and cement. The most recently built church, constructed mainly of brick, is a very imposing structure.

An American city approaching 15,000 inhabitants covers quite a large territory, owing to the wide streets and vast number of private dwellings, with plenty of room for spacious yards; but Haugesund, like nearly all European towns and cities, is huddled in a heap, though not nearly so much so as Stavanger and many other places, with their old-fashioned alleys and streets. Haugesund has scarcely any narrow streets, but the people occupy every nook and corner of each and every house, packed with an economy of space that must be seen to be believed. The American town of Story City, for instance, with its 1,700 well-housed people, covers nearly as much territory, I should say, as does Haugesund itself with many times that number of inhabitants.

There is one small park, but outside of that there is scarcely a tree, the surroundings being rather bare and uninteresting. There is, however, usually a forest of masts to be seen in the narrow, well-protected harbor, and here on the docks and wharves is where most of the interest centers. Here, as well as throughout all the streets, the paving consists of cobble-stones, and when a vehicle with iron-tired wheels passes over them the noise is nothing short of ear splitting.

A few minutes' walk beyond the outskirts of the city brings one to a splendid monument, erected in 1872 in honor of Harald the Fair-haired, on the spot where tradition indicates that he found his last resting place. In the year 872 he united the various petty kingdoms in one, and each of these vanquished territories is represented with a granite shaft with its name inscribed thereon, and in their arrangement around the monument they produce a striking effect.

Near Haugesund is situated Avaldsnes, my mother's birthplace, which I determined to visit. I was fortunate enough to secure the companionship of Kolbein Sund, an old retired merchant, himself born there. We walked along the sound on a smooth graveled road, which, when measured, showed an average width of about fifteen feet. Such, usually, I found the graded roads in Norway; the cultivated fields, timber tracts, or heathery, rocky wastes running parallel, and with no line of division between.

We stopped to look at the "Seven Sisters," a row of tall unadorned stones planted here in the long ago by some heathen, no doubt. It is likely that they were placed to commemorate some ancient deed of valor that has found no place in history or tradition. A mere glance was enough to convince me that the "Seven Sisters" had not originally belonged there, though they had come into a remarkably perfect harmony with their surroundings. We pause before nature's handiwork, again and again, in wonder and delight; but the rudest efforts of man show a different style, and we immediately recognize the difference, yet hardly know wherein it consists.

Not far from the Sisters we crossed the sound in

a "fløt" boat (toll boat) for we were on the wrong side of the water, on the mainland, our destination being a certain point on the isle of Karten. For one cent apiece a boy rowed us across the sound, which is subject to remarkable alternations in the flow and ebb of the tide. The tide held the boat nearly sidewise as the poor lad fought to gain the opposite landing-place. Because of the exceedingly narrow and lengthy strait, with only an occasional widening here and there, the water is forever trying to catch up with the outside tide-motions, but seems never quite to succeed, either in the flow or ebb. Having paid our bill(!) we took respectful leave of our willing "fløt" man, encountering immediately after, to our great surprise, a band of gypsies. There was no good reason why we should be excited over it, for we had known that there are quite a number of these "fanter," as they are called, both of foreign and native extraction, that roam up and down the country, begging or pilfering, as the case may be. We had not been looking for them, that was all. They make a pretense of working at a trade, such as kettle-repairing and the like. They have no laws or creeds, and come and go like migratory birds. Their morals are as a rule quite lax.

An old hag had managed to fill her kettle with pigs' feet, potatoes, carrots, and other things, and I am sure it was going to taste finely, but we managed to time our stay so as to escape before it was served. A younger woman had charge of a dozen little brats, some her own, some belonging to a daughter of the hag, and the rest on Topsy's plan, not claiming any parentage in particular. There were several men about but none seemed to feel the responsibility of fatherhood. How utterly sad to contemplate such miserable offspring, wrought as they

are in the image of their Maker and yet doomed to be reared in the very lap of ungodliness! Oh you Christian, throw not only your dollar at them, but go and show your love to such a child by the caress of your hand, and by the actual offering of heart and spirit, minister personally, and be surprised at the result. Money is good when rightly used, but this exclusiveness of the well-to-do is one of the curses of Christendom.

My friend, Kolbein Sund, asked where all these little ones were wintered. He trusted that there was some kind of an institution in Bergen or Christiania where they could be placed during cold weather. At this the young mother was seized with an immoderate fit of laughter, and could barely find words to emphasize her contempt for a man who was simple enough not to know that no one cared for "fanter" (gypsies). Such is, however, as far as I know, not the fact, the "commune" being responsible for all in need, irrespective of condition. She continued to leer at Sund, and said to him furthermore: We do not want to be taken care of. Our young ones stand it well enough, and if they don't they get sick and die, as some of yours do; that's all. She laughed us to scorn, and we left, deciding that to do missionary work under such circumstances takes both zeal and patience.

We came upon the church where mother was baptized, and it interested me very much to learn that it is considered the most interesting landmark hereabouts, being the oldest house of worship in this particular part of the country.

The church was originally built by the Catholics about eight hundred years ago. Its length is 120 feet

and its width 40 feet. The masonry is several feet thick. The interior is rather plain. The altar pieces in many of these ancient churches are quite elaborate both in painting and in images, the latter often representing the crucified Christ, the Holy Virgin, and a vast number of chubby angels. Though there is considerable real art, crude work is not infrequent. The church fell into neglect and ruin after its evacuation by the Catholics; but of late it has been restored.

The Holy Virgin's needle occupies a distinct place in the cemetery about the church, being set close to the wall and reaching clear up under the eaves, about 30 feet high. It is exceedingly slim, being only a few feet in circumference at the base. It is said that King Avald buried a favorite cow here. This may be read in Snorre Sturlason's ancient history of Norway.

The attendance in these country churches is fairly good, and perhaps still better in their "bede huse" (houses of prayer) scattered throughout the various districts in proportion to the interest in such work. I was told that there was more religious enthusiasm here on the west coast than in almost any other section in the country. Here they remain for the most part faithful to the old truths, the unadulterated Word, not being smitten by the "higher criticism" or the new-fashioned theology emanating from the larger cities, these, in turn, having obtained it mostly from the South, and especially from Germany. The leaven of the modernists is being broadcast over various sections of the country, but many serious thinkers and observers believe that the more conservative rural population throughout the length and breadth of the land will struggle valiantly to pre-

serve intact the old established principles of faith and doctrine — that is, full allegiance to the written Word in the Holy Script.

After much questioning we finally located the house where mother was born. A large languid woman, who had just risen from her afternoon coffee, opened the door and bade us enter. We did so, and found a rather gloomy interior, these ancient houses being built with but few apertures in the thick log walls to admit light. There were two large rooms facing the east and the light, with a dark alley between connecting with an outer door, but the rooms for sleeping and for other domestic uses were hidden away in the darkest corners of the house. The floors were of wide pine boards, deeply worn except the knots. The chairs never could find a resting-place for all four legs at once. The woman was no relative of either of us, so looked rather uninterestedly upon our eager scrutiny of her parlor and boudoir, which she considerately allowed us to see. Kolbein's chest heaved and mine throbbed just a little as we gazed about, he hearing as from afar his own childhood's croon and I an infant's querulous plaint. The beds and cradle, with their high, protecting sides and coarse coverlets, looked as of old, and the imagination had naught else to do than to conjure up the former inmates, the surroundings having altered not at all. We resented just then the intrusion of others into this sanctuary, as we chose to regard it, but strove as best we could to smother our resentment.

Old Kolbein and I returned to Haugesund, happy but wet, under a common umbrella in a soft, mist-like rain. His interesting reminiscences of by-gone days made the way none too long, and I was just a little

sorry when the rim of our umbrella suddenly scratched hard against his door.

A week's stay at Haugesund made me feel like an old inhabitant, it being natural for me to adjust myself to conditions, whether among Orientals, Norwegians, American Indians or American mongrels; and unless one has this adaptive faculty it were foolish to dream of extensive travel. I lived at a quiet "pensionat" (boarding house) where good substantial dinners were served for fifteen cents. I had a good room and the best of hostesses to dispense cheer and provide the atmosphere of a home. The mayor of the town took his meals here during the "week end" absence of his family, and proved a most entertaining fellow boarder. From him I learned that the city government rests on a very stable basis, and that economy and efficiency is the watchword throughout all its branches. There is no graft. The poor are so well taken care of that actual want is almost unknown. Litigation is rare. There is some rowdyism among the sailors occasionally, mostly caused by drink, otherwise order is not difficult to maintain. One need not fear to walk any of the streets of Haugesund after midnight. The schools are good, the children being fully as advanced in the common branches as with us. Here, also, the children are early trained to show proper deference to their elders. "Fresh" youngsters are not much in evidence.

It was impressed upon me here that it does not necessarily take vast resources to insure a fair degree of prosperity and success in a commonwealth, but mainly efficient, upright citizens.

CHAPTER XIX

Sveen

ALTHOUGH Haugesund interested me much, the country immediately to the north, called Sveen, interested me more, and I was glad when I could embark on the steamer Folgefond bound for the coast-station Tjernagel, my father's birth-place, about seventeen miles distant. Hardly had we left the protecting embrace of the sound when Sletten bore down upon us with mighty waves from the main body of the North Sea itself, which no protecting islands hindered from lashing Sveens rock-ribbed coast. Sletten is synonymous with seasickness to the dwellers on this particular stretch of the coast. Its waters are nearly always in a state of unrest, being the connecting link between the great Hardanger fjord and the open sea. Though again almost overcome, I was able occasionally to give a glance at the shore, and could see what presented itself to my imagination as the coast of the Country of Despair. From the sea rose the cliffs, abrupt, jagged and uncouth, with but few scattering inlets that could serve as havens.

A fellow passenger told me that the coast population was largely dependent on the fisheries for a living, good soil being scarce, with little but rocks and heather on every side. But few cattle and sheep were raised, and these found substance in summer chiefly among the gray, heathery hills near the coast, where a few wisps of grass were to be found mingling with the heather. In winter the stock is housed, fed and tended like babies,

never seeing the outside of their bedrooms till the late dawn of another spring. When they are let out on the grass after their long confinement, they turn somersaults and act in a silly fashion for hours at a time. One of the reasons why they are kept so closely confined is because of the fear of a slight speck of manure being lost. The manure is hoarded and carefully kept in well protected places, mostly in the barn cellars, for without it the worn-out soil refuses to yield anything. Not only are the cows turned to good account in this way, but also the very air itself, for at Notodden fertilizer material is extracted from it in large quantities and distributed widely at reasonable prices. The imprisoned cows' fare consists largely of the excellent Norwegian hay and barley straw, together with a delikatessen slop, now and then, consisting of crabs, herring heads and other such dainties. They are eager for this, as well as for their beverage of hay soup, made from boiled hay. They drink a lot of this, if they may, with excellent results in the yield of milk. The women-folk do the chores, and they also tend the little farms, to a very great extent, being left at home, while the men, young and old, embark on the precarious business of wresting living treasure from the sea. Often the fishing is but poor, while at other times it is almost too good, with an opposite effect on prices which dwindle to nearly nothing, so that there is hardly more profit from plenty than from scarcity. The work is quite hazardous, the death-toll being large, and many are the widows and orphans in Norway who look askance at the sea. Seal hunting is not altogether without profit, though here carried on only by a few private individuals in smaller craft.

Instead of landing directly at Tjernagel, I came

with the ship to Langevaag, situated on Bømmel island on the opposite side of the fjord. Here lived an old lady of eighty-two years, a relative, grandfather's half-sister, whom I wished to see, availing myself of this opportunity.

She wept with joy at my coming and at my bringing news of her children in America. I have often been touched by the pathetic eagerness displayed by old Norwegian parents when watching the incoming mails and hoping fervently for news of their loved ones, only to be disappointed again and again. To write regularly is the best comfort the absent ones can give them. How greatly is this attention appreciated, but how often it is omitted!

Dear old Kari bustled about and prepared a meal for us two consisting of potato-cakes, syrup, cheese, coffee and rye bread. At a later meal she provided hard-tack, to be dipped and softened in the coffee, kringla and "fløite-kaadla," which is soured milk with the cream left on. We ate out of the same bowl, of course, but she insisted on my scooping into my spoon all the cream and sugar, while she self-denyingly dipped her own spoon into the bowl near its edge, till its contents were exhausted.

When I essayed to take the lower kringla, out of politeness, as I had learned was their custom, she would have none of it, but gently forced me to let go, tipping the upper and nicer one cleverly into my hands. The hostess is continually urging her backward guests to take the best and amply, while the visitors partake with a seeming unwillingness, as if feeling themselves unworthy of so much as a bite. They always say grace at table, before and after eating, and the visitor always tenders

his thanks to the family at the end of the meal, saying over and over again, "Tak for maden" to each, and accompanying the "Thank you's" with fervent hand-clasps. It means much to them to have enough to eat, and they are correspondingly thankful to the Great Giver as well as to each other. To an American, accustomed to rich and generous fare, this excess of thankfulness for the simplest food appears almost silly, though it may quicken his sense of the abundance it is his privilege to enjoy at home.

When I told the old lady I had but recently come from Valdres and had seen the old homestead and old Marit, remembered of yore, she grew almost hysterical and would no doubt have fallen on my neck, but luckily the table was between us, and she remained content to gaze wonderingly as I told of my visit. Her endless questioning showed me how many things I had overlooked, and made me resolve to observe more closely in my further wanderings. She had not seen or heard from her folks in Valdres for sixty-five years, when she left that country for good in the company of grandfather.

Old Kari was her own housekeeper, though sharing part of the homestead with her eldest son and his family. She kept always to her own rooms, where she continued her knitting and spinning as of yore, as if yet responsible for the comfort and well-being of her family. Though the children were scattered and the husband dead these many years, her enthusiasm for work never dwindled, and she was living her life of usefulness to the very end. I was astonished to hear that she had never since childhood worn a stitch of clothing save what she had knitted or spun herself. And because of such activity and skill she was enabled to do for others and not only

for herself. Thus her prayers, interest and efforts in behalf of the missions, and in the general spread of the gospel everywhere, would put to shame many with better opportunities for such work. I was particularly impressed by her refinement and gentleness of manner — a common trait among genuine Bible students, by the way, and one that I mention merely as an instance of what I so often met with among the rural folk, missing, however, such bearing, at times, among those in the so-called higher classes, where we might have the better reason to expect it. Such, also, has been my experience in our own good country. True refinement is not the attribute of certain sets or classes merely, but is the mark of a kind heart and a high ideal.

In the morning the devoted old soul caught me in bed, having slipped noislessly into the room with a bowl of steaming coffee, a lump of sugar, and a "kringla." She nipped at my sleeve to let me know she had brought me "kaffe paa sengen" — a custom of the country, but one that makes a man rather uneasy the first time his room is thus unexpectedly invaded by the maid or lady of the house. But I did not resent the intrusion, and could not but try to smile back at the beaming, wrinkled face bending over me. She set down her tray and invited me to partake, but she would not let go of my sleeve, for such beautiful fabric she had never seen and she must be allowed to examine it closely and feel of it again and again. She grew quite despondent because of her inability to duplicate it. She thought her own work exceedingly coarse in comparison. As homespun material, however, it was most excellent, and besides the feathers she had loaded me down with several pretty coverlets of it, which I now had ample opportunity to

examine. She was much put out at my early departure, and would have me promise to visit her again and, above all, to greet her loved ones in America, and if possible induce them to write oftener.

As Kari's son and grandson happened to be lying at anchor ready to depart with their great sailship on a

Drawing by E. Biorn.

Kari.

North Sea fishing cruise, they made it their business to carry me across the fjord before lying out to sea. During a recent trip, the sea had yielded them four hundred barrels of mackerel, which they caused to be shipped and sold at a good profit in American markets. The fish are caught on baited lines, and hence there is scarcely any

rest allowed the crew, night or day. When the haul is good, two weeks' stay on the fishing grounds sees the crew completely worn out and demoralized, because of the steady pull and strain and lack of rest. When full they hurry home as fast as the wind will take them, disposing of their wares and taking snatches of neglected sleep at any or all hours, night or day.

On my arrival at Tjernagel haven a boat was launched upon the fretful sea, only to bob crazily up and down alongside, seemingly helpless enough with its own burden without having an extra wabbling weight or two added. To exchange the stable ship's deck for such flimsy, tottering craft, is one of the least inviting experiences that I know. It is impossible to decide on which foot to stand, and with the proper amount of dizziness and nausea added to the general misery, and also excitement and risk, one feels that life hangs but by a slender, uncertain thread. Once out of the boat I pushed up the steps of the diminutive wharf, hurriedly, as when one closes the door fearsomely behind one's back, to be rid of the dark at night.

Very near the landing place, and typical enough, are situated a country store, the post-office, the store-keeper's dwelling, and a freight and boat-house. Here the country folk within a distance of half a dozen miles or so get their mail, which is left by steamers several times during the week, their groceries, and a small part of their clothing and foot-wear. Here they deliver their little stores of eggs and butter, and here they discuss the weather and the fishing prospects, and hear the news of their neighbors as well as "Amerika-nyt." Once upon a time, when the noted Rejar Tjernagel was living, there had been great bustle and activity in the place, numberless fishing

vessels touching here on their way through the fjord, coming or going, when on fishing expeditions. Thus Rejar's name became known all over the western coast. Since then a peace as of a hundred years seems to have settled over all, greeting me with a Sabbath stillness as I wended my way from the hamlet and seashore, towards

Tjernagel. *Drawing by E. Biorn.*

the homestead of my fathers — the present home of Aunt Barbru, father's sister and former playmate.

Like all old-fashioned dwellings in Norway, the house was rather low, with the rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, to correspond. The windows were few enough, and because of a rather awkward arrangement, the living room was less cheerful than it would have been if the sun could have peeped in from the south.

A small kitchen and a corner to store fuel — peat mostly — occupied one end of the building, and from here an ancient oven was run through the wall into the dining and sitting room, answering the purpose of a cook stove at one end and a heating stove at the other. It emitted considerable smoke from the slow-burning peat, but otherwise answered its purpose very well, considering its age, which was two centuries. On top of it could be baked "flad-brød," oaten cakes, and other eatables. It took longer to make the kettle boil with peat than with wood or coal; but once well begun, it kept the proper boiling temperature without change if properly tended. The end of the stove sticking through the wall into the sitting-room stood on very long legs and enabled Bendick, Aunt Barbru's youngest son, to crawl in under for his nap, or for whatever other important purpose came into his head.

The visitor reigned in state in the "kammers," or sleeping room, at the other end of the building, where the pictures and knick-knacks belonging to the family were gathered, and where some of the best dresses were hung, and where the bed had the best feathers, the best coverlets and many other best things of which a well-appointed sleeping room can boast. It was impossible to suffer from cold when buried under such an avalanche of bed covers; nor did I.

Dear old aunt Barbru made the best oaten cakes I have ever eaten. They are a most wholesome article of food. Indigestion would speedily take flight if they were more generally found on the table. My aunt's cakes were made of good, clean oats, dried on a drying oven, the whole grains ground fine, and then, mixed with potatoes, made into flat round cakes which were baked

through and through, over a moderate fire, on top of the oven. With a little butter and cheese on top, and eaten with sips or spoonfuls of sour milk, they make a food that Norwegian giants formerly thrived upon. Sad to say, this giant's food is slowly but surely going out of fashion even in Norway, and richer, more concentrated foods are taking its place.

While staying at my aunt's I had the honor of being invited to a couple of weddings in the vicinity. These were real folk-festivals, lasting several days and enjoyed to the utmost, and at their close the bride and groom might be said to be properly launched on the voyage of life. Aunt and I took enough bread and butter with us to outlast our stay, and so no doubt did the others, for there was enough provender of various descriptions to supply a small army. The bride's parents were thus spared much expense, and though the meals had to be cooked and served, extensive advance preparations were rendered unnecessary. The wedding differed widely from the fashionable ceremony so common with us. We went by boat a considerable distance before we reached the church, and here we settled down happily to enjoy the interesting ceremony and listen to the most excellent advice of the Rev. Mr. Aall, the then minister. The knot being duly tied, there was singing in unison, in which all heartily joined, and finally there was protracted hand-shaking and there were good wishes without number. The boat ride back again made some of us slightly sea-sick, but not seriously enough to impair our appetites. We were placed at table somewhat according to station, though the American was set much higher than he merited and dangerously near the bride — in fact, so near that he in his trepidation, trying to do exactly the right

thing at the right moment, did the opposite, and spilled a well-filled bowl of gravy over my lady's lap. The poor bride looked sorrowfully at her dress, for it was partially ruined, and the groom glared straight at me as if consumed with hatred, but recovered himself instantly and the unfortunate incident was quickly glossed over with merry talk. The toastmaster had opened by asking a blessing and extending a cordial invitation to all to partake generously of the material blessings before them; and they did. The "lefse," a thinly rolled cake, round, and about a foot and a half in diameter, made from flour, milk and water, and baked on top of the oven — being in fact twin sister to the flad-brød — spread with butter and sugar, rolled into a cylindrical form and eaten from the end — words fail me further, but this was what we had to begin with. Home-made beer, mild and innocent, was passed around in great Russian bowls gayly decorated with inscriptions inviting the holder to partake. The guests drank from the same bowl to the very dregs, and then it was quickly refilled, to make another round, being made to revolve as it was passed from hand to hand and mouth to mouth. There was a boatful of fresh, cooked codfish. The meal lasted long, for there was much to be said between every two bites; and those who stood empty and sober, waiting for their turn at the second or third table, thought the conversation dull and uninteresting. After dinner there was enough hand-shaking to supply a presidential reception. No sooner were we well through with dinner than we were treated to coffee, kringla and krullers, and thus it went from early morn till late at night; we were munching something all the time, and kept it up for three days. We got little sleep, for the old must needs talk and gossip

and smoke, wile the young must watch their opportunity to get acquainted, fall in love, and perform such other preliminaries as are necessary to insure future weddings; for marrying and giving in marriage are popular in Norway, and proper encouragement is given to those contemplating matrimony. And the married ones nearly always stay married, for marriage is considered holy, and divorces as coming from the devil. In the cities, however, the divorce evil is eating its way into the heart and core of society, and, if not checked, will help more than a little to bring about corruption and decay in the nation.

I should perhaps have said a few words about the fleas and a few other discomforts experienced, also that one whole day to be married in is enough and preferable to three — the bride had to have a different dress for each day — but I refuse to report anything unpleasant when there was so much of the other sort, with kindness on every hand, in which the American was made a sharer far beyond his reasonable expectation.

Aunt Barbru and I took several other walking trips together, but especially would I mention our journeys to church, to which the distance from her home was seven miles. Services opened at eleven, but we started at nine so as not to be late. We had provided ourselves with lunch, for that we had need of, both coming and going. Passing the nearest neighbor's house, we were joined by a member of that family, and soon there were other recruits, and as still more continued to join us we were, before long, a respectable little army of worshipers headed for the House of God. The men headed the procession in a straggling group, while a bevy of rosy-cheeked females followed. If there was anything of a lighter nature to carry, the women did the carrying and

not the men. Such was the custom, and no one thought it out of place, the women least of all. Heavier burdens would, of course, have been unhesitatingly shouldered by the men. It is amusing to think that these meek helpmates share the right of suffrage with their husbands. For some years man and wife have gone to the polls together.

Arrived at our destination, the women silently filed into the church, while the men scattered about in little groups to discuss the weather and kindred subjects. Other crowds were arriving in the same fashion, from various directions, the women streaming into the church and the men halting outside. Even after the last bell had rung, there were still many loiterers outside who could not make up their minds to enter before the service was well under way. The women sat together on the left side, while the men, from age-long custom, turned invariably to the right. The seats had very low backs, making it difficult to take a nap during the sermon, yet in spite of this there were nodding heads to be seen here and there. The minister was of a rather erratic cast, and certain parts of his discourse came out with explosive force, startling his hearers very much and the sleepers in particular. One sweetly slumbering old gentleman, suddenly aroused, tumbled to the floor in his excitement. Though odd and eccentric, the minister was a scholar and thinker, delivering himself of much splendid thought and a pure gospel of salvation.

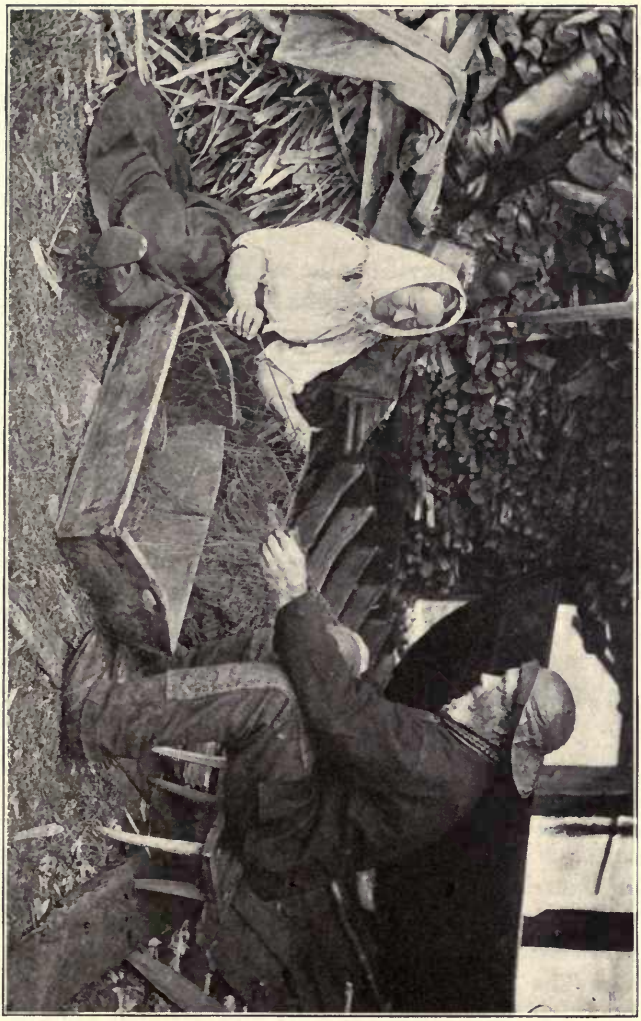
In my visits among the country people, and especially the old, I had been profoundly impressed by the deep and sound insight in spiritual matters among many of them, but found it not at all surprising when con-

sidering their excellent source of teaching and knowledge. The hymn collections of the church of Norway struck me as being particularly rich and appropriate. Nowhere, according to my opinion, does there exist any better. To my great surprise and downright dismay I learned that some of the laity, including most of those who frequent the more private religious gatherings, often set aside the grand old hymns and substitute inferior melodies and nondescript verse borrowed from roaming salvationists and other gospel-mongers. To the accompaniment of a guitar they will sing these cheap melodies over and over and over again, with an endless repetition of words. May the grand old songs and melodies always remain in vogue and sacred, and not be displaced by such catch-penny productions!

The cemetery near the church contained many graves, but scarcely any grave stones. There were many wooden crosses, with names and dates, and just a few of iron. In a grave ornamented by one of these rested Ola Andrias Anderson Aasbu, Barbru's husband. She told me that in digging the newer graves it frequently happend that the bones of earlier occupants were disturbed. On account of the rocks and stones it is not so easy to find sufficiently deep soil for a graveyard in many parts of Norway as in Iowa; hence, lots are at a premium, causing crowding upon other lots, especially where all vestiges of former mounds have disappeared. Smaller stones with but the coarsest of inscriptions would be better than nothing, to mark the graves, and would prevent re-openings and other similar cruel mistakes. Inscriptions on iron shafts are but short-lived. In some districts on account of the dearth of soil hundreds of

cartloads of it have been dumped upon the burying-ground to provide a sufficient depth for the proper interment of the dead.

During my last visit to Tjernagel I had the pleasure of accompanying cousin Johan, Barbru's eldest son, on a little fishing expedition in a bay of the fjord right near his home. We chanced upon a great shoal of fish, and a more interesting sight I do not believe it often falls to the lot of any one to see. The weather was very favorable for fishing purposes that morning, as we lay a little distance off shore, sighting through water telescopes for the merry revellers of the deep. We could see the silvery sheen of the darting forms glinting beneath the glossy blue. As yet, however, the experienced eye of the fisherman saw that the time was not ripe for throwing the nets. I gazed around at the lovely scenery as the morning sun burnished the cliffs and crags with gold, and I heard the distant tinkling of sheep bells, the dairy-maid's call across the fjord, heard — what sound was that? I was startled out of my indifferently listening attitude into one of rapt attention. A furious, rushing sound, somewhat like escaping steam, but with more of the note of a living voice in it, burst upon our ears. I searched heaven and earth for the cause, but became no wiser. Cousin Johan looked at me and smiled — he knew. Almost at the same instant a flock of sea-birds appeared and set up a fearful racket. When the whale blew again, I had him "spotted," and knew as well as he and the birds what the uproar stood for. The prey pulled toward the shore, inside the bay, scared to death at the fearful monster blubbering at their heels, who could swallow them by the bushel, or even faster, and they hurried obligingly into the nets, and — Johan in-



Mending the Nets.

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

stead of the whale had them. They were little herrings, several hundred bushels of them, and a wonderful sight they were when penned up. As we hung over them in our boats they would sometimes rise quite close to the surface, but if we showed them so much as a finger they would scatter, frantically, by the million. Johan was happy. Thus nature makes provision; meanwhile, Omnipotence reigns.

Of Mt. Siggen I had heard tell since childhood, and upon seeing it as it sat peaked and solitary on Bremnäs, straight across the fjord from where I was staying, I determined to climb it. I took the steamer from Tjernagel to Mosterhaven and landed thus on Moster Island which has the honor of bearing on its little back, besides the station and many pretty farms, the famous Moster church, Norway's oldest. It was built about a thousand years ago by Olaf the Holy and retains the old walls intact, their generous thickness serving as a shield against the wear and tear of the elements.

The interior of the church appeared dark and gloomy, owing to the fewness and smallness of the windows; for it was a bright day outside. Ventilation was entirely lacking, and there was an accumulated church-odor of centuries. In one of the walls is said to be an elongated hole, not through it, but running lengthwise, piercing its middle and communicating with a space at either end. No doubt these tubes in the wall had carried many a prayer and sweet message throughout the long yesterday of a thousand years — and hisses, and threats and vituperations too, who knows!

The altar was a diminutive affair, with scarcely standing room inside the little railing surrounding it for the minister to kneel and turn around in as he pro-

nounced the blessing, or administered sacrament to the eight kneeling communicants, the limit of the number that might partake at once. The bench-posts were high, with doors hinged to them at the entrance to the seats, which had flat bottoms, and these became as hard as stone when the services dragged. If I remember correctly, it was in this church that the pew-backs were so high that we could only obtain fleeting glimpses of venerable white crowns, yellow curls, or head-shawls, as we sat up to our necks in similar enclosures. There was a raised pulpit on the right side, enabling the congregation to view the minister plainly, though not each other, while the pulpit commanded a view of every corner. The woodwork in the belfry and elsewhere was unnecessarily massive, I thought, even though planned to last a thousand years or more; the builders wisely preferred to be on the safe side. In the God's-acre about the church was an upright stone with a narrow top through which a slit showed, the hole having been formed by Holy Olaf's foot when he kicked at this particular spot to make a place to tie his horse. The form of the boot instep shows on one side, and the place where the battered toes went through on the other. Let not the reader imagine that this story is merely a modern fabrication; years ago it was actually believed by many. And there are remnants of ancient superstitions clinging to the moss in the old log walls of many a backwoods hut to this day. The numerous "huldrer and trold" (gnomes and hob-gobblins) helped to augment the population of Norway in olden times, but of late they are rarely seen, and when I visited their former haunts and trysting places not a one could be induced to come forth. They have always been a shy sort, in fact, so much so

that those who had the privilege of seeing them never succeeded in getting a near view so as to determine exactly how they looked. And to get a photograph, be it but a snap-shot, is entirely out of the question, I am told.

As I was leaving the church I was pounced upon by an old lady from Bergen with whom I had become acquainted on a steamer trip, and who now bade me come with her to her summer villa near by for afternoon coffee. The coffee was only a pretext, but it served as an excellent excuse for a good chat together. "Eftermiddags kaffe" (afternoon coffee) is a misappellation; its name should be "gossip." I enjoyed that hour with the good lady and her friends as much as if it had been a banquet, and even more. In Norway I have met several good souls who actually seem to be on the lookout for chances to cheer other people's hearts.

To stumble unexpectedly across relatives was my good fortune here as in so many other places in Norway. It was a delight to me to surprise them and to study form and feature, to discover points of facial resemblance and other well known family characteristics. At Totland "gaard" (farm) I came across a distant branch of our clan. My advent caused a distinct sensation; a flying machine could not have been more unexpected. They searched their memories to establish the chain of connection between us, and, this chain once recovered, they grew eager to strengthen each link as a security against future forgetfulness. Like many, many others here, they opened to me their hearts regarding the slimness of their incomes and the barren prospects for future pecuniary progress and success. But generally they bore their

burdens sturdily and cheerfully. "For if we have enough to eat and wear," they would say, "we should not complain." And they have more. The climate is fine, the scenery interesting, schools excellent, church opportunities good, and peace reigns over all.

CHAPTER XX

Moster Island and Mount Siggen

MOSTER Island is indeed a rare and pretty spot. My first visit there occurred in the midst of haying. The day was fine and the air filled with sweet fragrance from the wilted blossoms strewn about, millions of sweet faces laid low, the pride of the roadside, and only fated to stiffen and bleach for the harvest. Men and maids, old and young, gathered peaceably about, to work if necessary, though none seemed over-actively employed. Though all meant to be busy, not merely the work, but also the trouble of getting out of each other's way, gave them employment. The little farms were set so close together that the different families had social intercourse in the hay-field, and not only in the parlor. There was time for talk as well as work; and over the low stone fences, many a stealthy glance was exchanged between young folk, forgetful of their task and the world just then. Their eyes spoke the secret of the soul, a secret that they felt, but could not undersand. As little as any one else these rural folk realize the why and wherefore of their fancies, but the impulses of the heart are not lightly to be disregarded. Sad to say, coercion on the part of parents to secure other and better matches for their children than their own fancy dictates, is very frequent in Norway, and has caused many a loveless marriage. Money, everywhere the root of all evil, is even here responsible for much harm.

The hay was cocked up and spread out again several times before it was finally considered cured. Sometimes it is hung up to dry on wires strung out one above another on posts five or six feet in height. In case of rain, the upper batch receives the brunt of it, protecting more or less those below. Protracted wet weather causes mildew and hurts the quality of the hay, with consequent heavy loss to the owner. The hay is always housed, so that no swarthy-coated, rain-drenched haystacks are to be seen anywhere.

Although the spell of the lovely island-spot was upon me, the insistent beckoning of Mt. Siggen which drew nearer and nearer as I loitered on along the roadside, finally proved a more potent charm, causing an involuntary quickening of my steps in its direction. I soon came upon a little sound, only a rod wide, separating the island from the main land; but it might have been still more insignificant and yet have prevented my passage; for the tide was in, making the sound pretty deep, while the boat I wanted lay secured ever so snugly on the other side. There was a house showing between the pines a little distance away, and toward it I directed the full force of my lungs. This soon roused an important-looking dog that came eagerly to bark and announce that I was not welcome. The barking roused his master, an old man who was in the full enjoyment of that famous Norwegian solace, the beloved afternoon nap, and who eyed me sourly upon being thus rudely disturbed. He shoved the boat over to my side without ado, and drew me across in a twinkling. I then gave him a coin, saying, "Vär so god" (used invariably when anything is tendered, but cannot be properly translated. "Please to accept" conveys the meaning fairly well),

upon which he doffed his hat, said, "Mange tak" (many thanks), and the proceeding was at an end. Before going, the idea occurred to me that it would save much trouble if the boat were attached to an endless rope extending across the sound, thus enabling each comer to ferry himself over. But I had forgotten about the toll and the officious dog.

This region is called "Guds rige," (God's kingdom), because the surroundings are thought to be so very attractive.

At the place I had taken lodging the good host prevailed upon the hired girl to row me over the bay, from whence I might reach the best point to ascend Mt. Siggen. At first I would have none of it, but when the girl calmly assured me she could accommodate another dozen like me, and when, unaided, she launched the boat and announced that we must be off, I acquiesced and meekly sat down in the end reserved for me, admitting willingly that she was the better man.

Arrived at the other shore, I got out without assistance, my companion being too busy with the boat to lend me a helping hand. I thought to take revenge by climbing the mountain alone, and intimated that such was my wish, but it would have been better had I engaged this capable maiden as guide.

I felt equal to several mountains while at its base, but had not proceeded far in the ascent before this feeling wore off. I decided to be satisfied with this one mountain for that day, but on the morrow we might perhaps do two or three — that is, if all went well. On the way I met Jakob Haavig, an old playmate of my mother's who was dumfounded when I told him my destination. What attraction that gray old mountain

could have for anyone, he could not see. Though he lived under its very shadow, he admitted he had scarcely seen its top. If it had not been for those roving sheep he would never have wasted a single step on it. Jakob quite failed to grasp the situation, and I did not try to help him. It would have taken years to change his point of view. He showed me the way, confused me with a lot of glibly-spoken directions, as is so often the case — directions to which one answers breathlessly "yes" a hundred times, as though it were as plain as day, meantime remembering not a thing. I retained, however, a hazy notion as to where the top lay, and in that general direction I now walked or crawled, eager and happy and feeling myself quite superior to Jakob and his directions.

To one reared on the prairie such a climb is indeed an experience, to which an ounce of timidity only gives added zest. It was such a delight to me to hop from stone to stone and bob into strange, ever-varying corners and crevices, that I forgot to be afraid or cautious, and blundered gleefully along, serenely satisfied and content. And, strangely enough, I did not miss my bearings, if I really had any, and, thus borne aloft on the wings of faith and enthusiasm, I soon gained the top, safe and sound, and eagerly drank in the view before me.

The wind stumbled heavily, so to speak, as it found itself suddenly barred in its progress, not having encountered a single obstacle since it left England, and having grown rough and boisterous in its play with the yielding ocean waves. I met its impact with deep inhalations and wide embrace, for after my heated climb I liked the feeling of its rough caress and its pure breath, coming as it did direct from its bath in the sea. Though the western ocean was quite deeply stirred by the teasing breeze,

from my height it appeared to lie in peaceful calm, with not a tremor showing on its surface. It seemed as if it had covered itself and its denizens with a blanket of repose, and my imagination failed in its attempt to picture the turmoil I knew existed beneath. The land lay as if it had been torn into fragments and flung in every direction. There were numberless islands, large and small, countless little capes and peninsulas, millions of irregular formations that have no name at all; and yet there was in it all a certain symmetry that no regular plan could have produced. From my elevated view-point the whole landscape appeared to have put on a suit of lifeless brown; the green of the valleys and forests had faded away and given place to similar somber garb. The ocean alone seemed capable of holding its own, retaining its usual blue; nor had the heavens changed any, but the clouds were not the same, betraying to me their unsubstantial nature as they flung their bodies threateningly against the mountain top, enveloping it and me in their clammy, ghost-like embrace. Though it obscured the view of the sleeping world beneath, I clung to the cairn near by till the main body of the vapor lifted, wherupon I bethought myself of the flight of time and of the descent. While the vaporous shadow hung over me, a loosely placed stone in the cairn took to tapping in the wind, and I was instantly made mindful of the builder of it, Lars Øiro, our neighbor in America. The knockings sounded supernatural enough, and the fog thickening again suddenly decided me in favor of going, and downward I accordingly straightway plunged. There was much aimless groping about, and I caught several tumbles, but luckily recived no bruises. A flock of sheep helped me out, for they took a notion to go home

that night, having evidently become alarmed at the Mysterious Presence capering about behind them. Though the mountain was not large and there would, no doubt, have been another way for me to take besides the one chosen by the sheep, I longed for their company, but had to fly sometimes in order to retain it. My longings were unreciprocated, however, and the flock would gladly have "shaken me," but did not seem capable of outwitting me — I felt a bit superior, but to tell the truth one need not be so surprisingly clever to be able to hold his own among sheep — and they finally arrived, panting, at Steensland "gaard," situated just across the bay from Kalevig, having led their palpitating shepherd an hour's merry dance.

CHAPTER XXI

In Söndhordland

IT was towards the latter part of August that I found myself, one beautiful dreamy morning, on board the steamer Hordaland, bound for Förde in Söndhordland. Our little steamer made all the noise it could as it passed through the tiny Føresfjord, waking the echoes on every hand and sending its hoarse whistle into every nook and corner, whence came echoing back the most doleful sounds, back from the hills and dells, crags and cliffs. The crew and pasengers were a happy lot, and if one might judge the human family by the individual samples on board the Norwegian trains and inland steamers, this old world would seem a cheerful place indeed. Mingling with them, one cannot fail to note the spirit of genuine trust they repose in one another.

The purser was the least concerned individual on board. He knew that if he did not collect all the fares, the ones he had overlooked were honest and would not let him rest in peace till he had been paid his due. At least, so it looked to me, if I might judge from the fact that in his occasional rounds he left it to the passengers to report the particular station at which each had boarded the boat. One gets the impression from the mass of the rural population that they have never wakened to the actuality of trickery and deceit. For instance, the idea of losing a satchel, an umbrella, a purse

or other article, by theft — why it is preposterous, absurd!

Førde is a little agricultural oasis in the midst of territory more or less barren. To the passengers whose eyes had become sated with rocks and heathery stretches, the green-crested hillocks and pretty meadows coming into view here proved refreshing indeed. There was the usual open-eyed scrutiny from the expectant throng at the pier, the more or less clumsy throwing of cables to secure the vessel in place, the lazy scramble to fasten them on the capstan by those in charge or others, the usual quiet, unhurried manner of all, this and more of the same kind served to give interest to the occasion.

The scenery along the Førde-Framnes road is highly picturesque. An almost hidden avenue opens shyly between the pines at a little distance from the road leading to a series of lovely little lakes nestling amid the hills beyond. The hills are covered with pretty pine growths and each lake sits in its own hollow hidden from the other, being connected but by slender sounds barely of sufficient width to enable one to make passage either in boat or when skating, without touching land. A more beautifully arranged skating ground I have never hit upon. The fine surroundings add much to the charm of the situation. The young folks foregather here during winter and enjoy the most glorious fun in playing hide and seek among these jolly, freakish stretches that Dame Nature seems to have provided for this very purpose. The Norwegians are good skaters, and they ought to be, for the numerous lakes and fjords afford them the best possible opportunity to become proficient in this excellent sport.

As I emerged from the fastnesses of the woods, and

drew past a few dreary stretches of rocks and boulders, I found myself on the sunny slopes of Framnes, which juts into the very bosom of Aalfjord. The sea lay calm, smooth and inviting and I determined, if possible, to make the passage to Trovaag that evening, the "if" hinging altogether on the boatman who, I thought, reasonably enough, might be located here somewhere. So did the others, for at each house where I asked for "skyds," they always thought surely I would be accommodated at the next. I was making my last stand before the only house left, and had but opened the door, when I found myself face to face with a surprised person who still held his hand poised to grab the door-handle, for he had been on the point of going out when I pulled the door away from him to go in. Under these circumstances it took him some time to collect his wits and find his voice. I followed him into the house, and there I learned, after some preliminaries, that if I thought of going to Trovaag I ought to set about it promptly. He murmured something about doing a man a favor and absented himself forthwith. I looked questioningly at the wife and eight children in whose midst I sat, and I was given to understand that the father had only gone out to see about the boat and would soon be back. All the children were young, as was their mother also. She looked healthy, and so did they. They all looked steadily at the visitor, who in turn regarded them with unfeigned delight. For every smile given they slowly gave back little ones of their own, but never indulged them too freely for fear of seeming too bold and brave, which they were not. One little fellow looked so long and fixedly at me that I was on the point of being hypnotized, but, luckily for me, when he had reached

the height of his hypnotic influence, he dropped asleep, and the spell was off. I asked the good mother what particular food she had hit upon to feed and fatten up her flock so successfully. I took her by surprise, for she had to admit that she had never given the matter a thought, and answered that she gave them only of the simplest, for they were many and the husband's wages small. She told me she fed them mostly "flad brød," rye bread, skim-milk, cheese and potatoes, with now and then a little meat and fish. There was often nothing but "flad-brød" and sour skim-milk. On this each could make a meal costing about one cent. Had their sound little stomachs been introduced to cake and pie and other rich and highly seasoned foods, the rosy cheeks would, no doubt, soon have taken on a less attractive hue. I ventured to remark that the family shoe bill must needs be large, whereupon I was told that there was hardly any expense for shoes at all, the husband and father during winter making wooden shoes for all the family. With good, home-knitted woolen stockings, these answered their purpose very well, keeping the feet airy, dry and warm, better than leather.

I surmised that the lady of the house must be a very busy woman with so many youngsters to care for and with so little help. She rather thought not, for their fare was so exceedingly plain that it did not require much effort to prepare it, nor to clear the table afterwards. And as all the family spent most of their waking hours either out of doors or in the one large room, the house was easily looked after. There was no dusting of any unused parlor in this establishment. Homespun, made never to wear out, supplied breeches for the little fellows, and these were handed from older to

younger in regular succession. Boys' suits were made from the same material as well as dresses for the girls, and, whether for winter or summer, the staunch stuff served its purpose well. These people lived simple lives, but they were healthy, intelligent and God-fearing, and to all appearance, content.

As my good friend and I sat squarely facing each other while rowing, we could hardly do aught but talk. I wanted to help ply the oars but at this suggestion he looked actually horror-stricken, whereupon I quickly decided not to say another word on the subject. Meanwhile I admired the view behind his back — a view that I had time to study in every detail before the scene was shifted. We pass thus into the future backwards, as did my oarsman, who saw only the receding panorama as he drove his craft trustingly onwards.

My companion pointed out the enormous growths of seaweed that lay bobbing fantastically, half submerged, in weird-looking clusters near the shore, and explained that this marine vegetation was but seldom used for feed or fuel, but sometimes for manure, although few took the trouble to dredge for it. He said that as a rule the people were too easy-going to hunt up work in this manner.

The good man confided to me that he had often thought of going to America for the sake of his family, but as long as they all were happy and content here, he could not make up his mind to engage in such an undertaking. He desired my opinion, and being directly asked, I concluded it safe to give it, and told him that if he journeyed the world over he would find nothing worth exchanging for happiness and contentment, even though he might change places with princes or plutocrats. He

seemed to like my answer and rowed faster and better than before, and even essayed to sing a song. He did not hesitate to admit that the secret of his happiness lay in an unquestioning belief in his Lord and Saviour, as revealed to him in the Good Book and by daily association with him in prayer. So many are ashamed to mention God and his attributes except in discussion and argument that it was indeed a privilege to meet this good soul who spoke of Him so openly and without a touch of worldly fear or scruple.

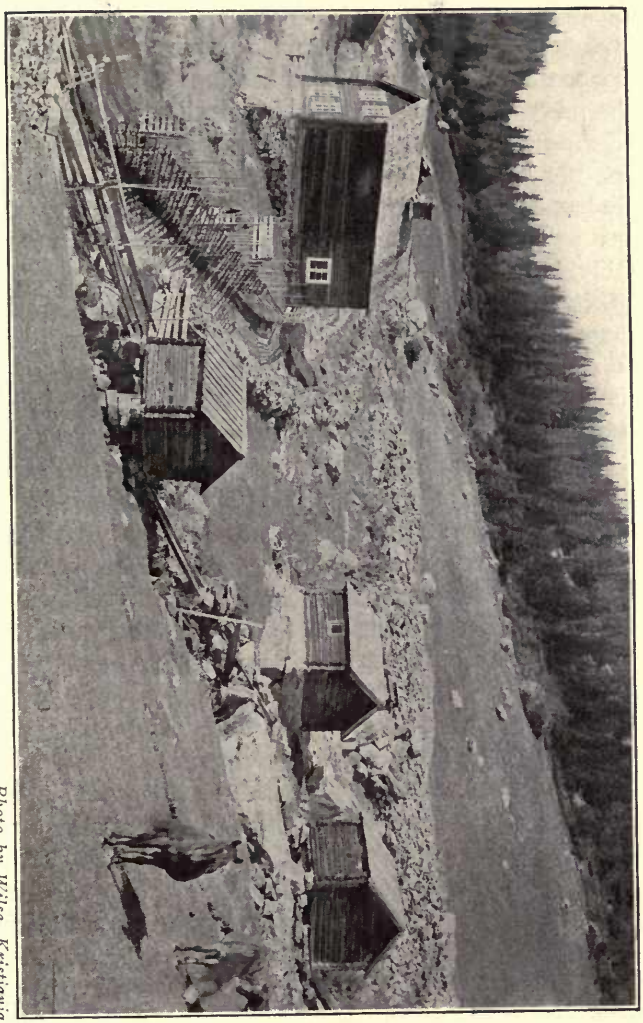
There was the barest touch of a breeze, which somewhat lessened the effort of rowing, yet was sufficient to stir into action a million little waves that played and danced about the boat, sending back innumerable reflections of the sun's rays. It was a delight to watch these pretty antics of the water but it came into our minds as a regret, just then, that nature has to make so many wonderful waves and other things of beauty that no one ever sees. It is our loss, however, not Nature's, for she is satisfied with exhibiting her wonders before the all-seeing, appreciative eye of the Creator, Nature's keeper.

Upon our arrival at Trovaag my friend seemed loth to return, for we had enjoyed each other's society and would fain have prolonged the enjoyment. Like nearly all others among the rural population to whom I have paid money in this country, there was no careful scrutiny of my offering, nor did he any more than the others, appear to accept it otherwise than with a sort of reluctance. They would talk about the weather or most any subject except the matter in hand, but when once the money was in their actual possession, forced upon them, as it were, they would utter their thanks as if for a gift

instead of a payment for services rendered. It looked beautiful to me, for it was without affectation, and but typical of their modest, generous natures.

At Trovaag I came upon a post-office and country store, but as neither met any of my requirements, and no lodging-place was to be had, I promptly turned my steps toward the old mill nearby, owned by a one-time American. Here, according to my informant, I might possibly be received for the night. But in this I was disappointed, for the miller had no spare bed, nor was he very well satisfied with his own lone couch, since his littered office, bed-room and sitting-room, all in one, gave evidence of being thoroughly infested by fleas. He promised to find me a place for the night; meantime we must see the mill and have a chat about America. The buildings were hoary with age and a coating of meal, while the interior was murky and gray from years of accumulated dust and of neglect. The machinery was largely of an ancient pattern, and much broken refuse lay scattered about. The affair was run by water-power supplied by a lake owned by the proprietor. Though it was such a topsy-turvy looking establishment the owner claimed he did a good business, mainly because of the discontinuance of many smaller mills in the surrounding country. Many look askance at this change fearing that it will have a tendency to discourage home thrift, other innovations of similar character having also made their appearance.

The old miller told me he had lived a while in America long before I was born. He spent two weary months on the voyage over, but once on land he did not remain idle a moment, but, together with his companion, a mutual friend, as it proved, he became a wood-



"Koernhuse." Small, water-driven country mills.

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

chopper, and, workmen being scarce, considerable money was before long coaxed into his keeping. It was touching to note his eagerness upon hearing the news of his old friend who, to my knowledge, had located at Story City, Iowa, while he, the miller, immediately upon acquiring a competence, had hurried back home. Upon my finding fault with him for making such seeming selfish uses of our country's resources, he grinned rather sheepishly, but answered that he thought we had the best end of the bargain, since the few who had come back and the money sent home in gifts, or otherwise, could not begin to compare in value with the youth and strength of the nation that had left their own and embarked for foreign shores. And this, when one thinks of it, is very true, as already remarked; for how would the wealth of our fair country have been possible if it had not been for the advent of these sturdy comers who promptly took hold and steadfastly appied themselves, thereby producing it? It had never before been so forcibly impressed upon me what our nation owes to these splendid immigrants from the North as when the truth was spoken by the old miller. He told me that of the comparatively few with capital who came back with the avowed intention of settling down, only a small proportion really made up their minds to do so, but these almost invariably made model farmers, becoming object lessons in thrift and progressiveness in their respective neighborhoods. He had noticed that the majority of those who returned for visits or otherwise loved to linger two or three months among former friends and old associates when, suddenly, they would grow restless, the new-world-spirit awoke and lived anew, and off they would go to their prairie homes in the West.

The friendly old miller escorted me to the neighbor-

ing Haraldeidsvaag, where he guaranteed me a stopping-place with his brother, who conducted a little country store and inn at this place. There were scarcely any other buildings, but it sufficed for the wants of the rural population who might purchase sufficient for their modest needs, get their mail and when desired, meet the steamer that, twice a week, noisily nosed its way into the narrow alcove (vaag) fashioned so extraordinarily between the hills. The proprietor was an intelligent man and posted me on the news of the neighborhood and the country at large. It was here particularly that my attention was drawn to the fact that the newspapers of Norway contain far less reading matter than ours, but more succinct, reliable information, enabling a man to master their contents quickly and thus gain time for the reading of instructive books. Hence one does not find the usual excessive newspaper-reading in Norway, but, if anything, too much indulgence in the reading of questionable fiction, of which there has been a veritable flood in the last decade or two. Even the rural population has been slightly smitten, but among serious, thinking people I found that such reading matter invariably stood in high disfavor.

The next morning after having eaten four kinds of Norwegian bread and reduced the hotel milk supply very considerably, I came away with just forty cents less than I had possessed the day before. The good people were almost ashamed to charge so much! Under no circumstances would they accept more.

The road to Skjold was remarkable for nothing in particular except the many gates that barred the roadway, and the vast stretches of heather that in so many places ran parallel with it. If the stones were removed

and made into durable fences, the heather burned and the soil fertilized and cultivated, such land would yield rich returns and would be a benefit to the individual, the community, and the commonwealth. But the people are, as a rule rather backward in reclaiming this land, and, when urged to go at it, offer generally the time-honored excuse of their being too busy making both ends meet on the land they already have, to engage in a work entailing so much labor and expense and yielding so tardy returns. Though considerable public aid in reclaiming waste land has been given, the government would do well to lend a further helping hand here. I must have opened and shut that day a couple of dozen gates, built directly across the roadway to mark the dividing line between different estates. Though the roads are splendid, I imagine that American automobile scorchers would have a miserable time of it here.

I passed by the small trading places, Isvik and Skjoldevik, at one of which was a creamery, where I was told that the making of cream was growing in favor, finding a ready market, with a corresponding rise in the price of butter, which was hence too dear to be eaten by the producer and therefore largely replaced by oleomargarine.

The scenery continued somewhat tame and uninteresting till I reached Vats, where nature had made an attempt at elaboration, though on a very modest scale. The extensive swamps and peat bogs were no doubt valuable, in a way, and supplied a certain variety, but added no picturesqueness to the landscape. Although the swamps with their peat-beds have their worth, it would seem to me wise for the government to encourage drainage even more than at present. It would, no doubt, be

Photo by Wilse, Kristiania.

Hospitable Cow. Pastured during summer at the saeter.

cheaper in the end to import fuel than food. Not only peat but various minerals closely akin to radium, and — if I am not misinformed — even radium itself, are found at Vats, and no less an authority than Sir William Ramsay, the world-famous scientist, has been there to prove it. Hitherto it has appeared in such minute quantities that excavating operations have been carried on chiefly as experiments.

At noon I stepped into a wayside blacksmith shop to ask questions about the road and make enquiries for a friend of mine from America who originally hailed from here, and who was now back home on one of his biennial visits to friends in dear old Vats. The information was readily obtained but the giver of it proved both talkative and hospitable, seemed loth to have me resume my journey just then, and held out dinner as a pretext to delay me. Being in the mood to dine after my long walk, I did not refuse his kind invitation, but followed at his heels to the house, to the consternation of his wife who felt unequal to the task of furnishing proper entertainment for the august, bespectacled visitor. I always feel like an interloper when by such chance as this a hungry crowd of children and even "ma" herself, deem it incumbent on them to suppress their longings and stand around and wait while the intruder and "pa" feast and they suffer. A most agreeable host was this blacksmith, and well posted was he on affairs of state as well as keenly interested in community doings. Will ever the glorious day dawn when representatives such as this will be picked according to worth and placed in positions of trust, by the state and the community, to the eternal dismay of the selfish, loud-mouthed office-seeker? Although our talk was most interesting, my

host suddenly bethought himself of his nap, and as nothing could be allowed to interrupt this, he stretched himself full-length on a hard couch and almost instantly fell asleep. I had been induced to lie down on the best bed, but lay as wide-awake as ever, listening to the tick-tock of the old clock, and a subdued hum issuing from the kitchen, where the rest of the family were eating what we had left.

My American friend was superintending the work at a small stone quarry at Ølen, a few miles farther on; and thither I now bent my steps, rested and rejuvenated after my halt at the home of the good blacksmith. The road continued perfect as well as the weather. I chanced upon a solitary oak by the roadside, but after that saw few large trees of any kind. Some shrubbery grew near the brooks and a few scattering firs graced the mountain side. The farmyards were neat, the houses attractive, and the persons I met happy and healthy-looking. I ran across a wee, small lad with a bent pin for a fish-hook and no bait, fishing most industriously in a singing brook where there were no fish at all. He had great expectations, being nowise cast down and pinning his faith on the unseen. His eyes shone with excitement when he confided to me his great fishing plans for the future. It was no more ridiculous than when English Lords buy up whole rivers here and, with cart loads of rod and tackle, sit solitary guard over their property with scarcely a nibble as a reward. I met a red-cheeked old woman with a market basket under her arm who said she lived all alone and was very poor, but found solace and happiness in words such as these: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Her only son was a teacher in Christiania, and her great concern was lest he should

be turned from the faith of his childhood and be prevailed upon to run after the doctrines of men, contrary to the Word. She had heard much of these self-constituted Bible censors, and trembled for the spiritual safety of her son and others. She could do nothing but pray, she said. If all could do as much, this world would be near heaven.

CHAPTER XXII

Ølen. Etne. Fjellberg

I CAME into the district of Ølen towards evening, reaching the end of a tiny fjord pointing its finger into the very heart of a pretty, quite densely populated valley, and making a view well worth seeing as the latest rays of the setting sun bathed the landscape in gold. At the trading place I heard of my friend's whereabouts, and started immediately to climb the incline that led to the quarry. His charges consisted of men, women and children, who were at present re-assorting the quartz from which already the best pieces had been picked. The cost of transportation stood in the way of higher earnings for any of the parties concerned; hence quarrying operations very frequently languished. The product when shipped and upon reaching the refinery or manufactory, is ground and variously prepared and finally made into door-knobs, telegraph-line appurtenances, and other similar articles. My friend liked to go prospecting in the mountains, scrambling from hill to hill in quest of promising spots, and he would spend hours in painstaking search of the supposedly hidden treasures sure to exist somewhere and but waiting to be found. Like any other enthusiast whose chief reward is his love of the work, his interest never waned whether he met with gain or loss through his search. To the commercial type such apparently aimless delving would be maddening, yet such are the very ones that pounce like birds of prey upon their victim when through endless pains-

taking endeavor, treasure is finally uncovered, leaving often the poor discoverer to bewail his very success.

The walk next morning along the placid fjord past Ølen village, and then up the incline leading over the mountains to Etne, supplied me with numberless thrills of joyous pleasure as each separate attraction made its best bow, showing forth its particular prettiness or other remarkable feature. Especially is the view from the heights looking back over Ølen, with its picturesque surroundings of fjord and mountain, unusually fine. Equally interesting was the view that unrolled itself before my gaze on the opposite side as I entered the district of Etne. After another long walk I arrived at the outskirts of the populated parts in the valley below, and upon reaching a place where a family was at work near the roadside I made immediate enquiry for Østbø, the ancestral home of my own and my brothers' boyhood's companions, to visit which had been the main object of my coming to Etne. It was an officer in the army I happened to address, who was at home with his family on a prolonged furlough, and who, disliking to be unoccupied, considered himself not above ordinary manual labor. He was so well pleased with my notion of hunting up the old homestead in question that he insisted on having the honor reflect on him, also, as a mere resident of the district. That the second generation in a foreign country should become imbued with feelings and impulses impelling them to hie back to the cradle of their fathers in this manner, quickened and warmed his heart, he said, and from such intercourse would assuredly spring continued interest and devotion that would unite the countries in bonds of unity for a

long time to come. He was a serious-minded man and deeply attached to his people and country, yet he could not remain silent, even before me, a stranger, regarding the flippant, worldly tone that was at present rapidly permeating particularly the so-called upper class of the commonwealth, higher society in the army included. The Word, which alone can give sufficiency, was attacked and criticized by wiseacres in many quarters, and, considered as a perfect authority, found many dubious listeners even among those who deemed it worth while to offer it a serious hearing. The younger element were largely indifferent. Though there was ample opportunity to hear the old faith expounded in the greater number of churches, attendance often languished and Sunday amusements, attractions and distractions were growing in favor. He spoke with concern, for he knew that too much worldliness augurs ill for the well-being of a nation. It was his fervent hope that the country people and so-called lower classes would not be too deeply influenced, but would remain faithful and true, unaffected by the doubting, indifference and frivolty of the day.

So interesting did our talk become that I nearly forgot why I had come, and upon casually glancing at my watch I was startled into sudden realization of the certain, unerring flight of time, and the number of miles I had intended to cover before night. There are two Østebøs in Etne, quite far apart from each other, and though I stood nigh the threshold of one, it was, perversely enough, the place I did not want; so on I trudged in the direction designated by the army man toward the far-away Østebø (east meadow) I was looking for. I halted an hour for dinner at Etnesjøn, a

cluster of houses forming the village at the end of the pretty fjord that had elbowed its way in between the mountains and provided a passage for steamers.

It was delightful to walk along the pretty, well-kept lanes leading mountain-wards, taking their limit of liberties in odd twists and turns, as I headed, completely turned around as to directions, towards my destination. Etne exhibits its pride, baring its main body in open, fairly level stretches near the sea, but it sends also two large feelers in the form of pretty valleys into the mountains from whence in return, gush two tumbling rivers that find repose only upon reaching the quiet fjord below. As I was nearing the mouth of the east valley, whither I was bound, I turned and was treated to a most enchanting view, and one well worth coming far to see. No one had told me that I might expect to find any thing particularly interesting in this part of Norway; hence such a discovery was the more delightful.

Just before entering the valley I passed by pretty Grindheim perched on its hill some distance away from the roadside, a name thoroughly familiar to me since childhood, because our near and very kind neighbor, Lars, an early Iowa pioneer, had come from there. I met a young man to whom I spoke of the material prosperity and success of the early emigrants, many having come from this very vicinity, and he appeared to look upon it as a most wonderful provision; for, try as he might, he could not see how so many people could have made out to find bread at home had there been no America to go to. He found it hard enough, even now, to support his little family, and many of his neighbors were in like case. There were no abandoned farms and no carelessly-cultivated tracts, so far as he knew. Condi-

tions were not bad, yet he deplored the passing of the old-time economy and the consequent shrinkage in savings, though the incomes were really greater than of yore. Not all the farmers owned farms, but many occupied rented places or held equities or options therein some being helped to establish homes thus through cheap government loans. A desire for finer clothes, and for food other than that raised on the farm, and in some instances dislike for hard work, were mainly the causes of the unsatisfactory state of affairs. He also spoke of the decay of religious interest and activity particularly among the upper classes, and had already noticed that the leaven of corruption had slightly permeated the country schools through teachers who had become infused with the modern spirit. He feared that without religion in the schools the very props and foundations of enlightened society and good government were threatened, and that the nation, in such an event, would rapidly decline.

Threading the narrow, crooked valley, I enjoyed the prospect of quite an abundance of trees, though rarely of dense growth, and invariably rather small of size. These climbed the mountains quite bravely, but this was not so very remarkable, since there were no great heights in this region. Snow caps were discernible farther down the valley, showing through the haze about Winger. It was a beautiful sight. A pretty little lake had ensconced itself in the midst of this rich setting, enhancing very much the scenic attractions of this wing of Etne. Bordering on the lake were several pretty gaards such as Grønstad, Hovland, Rame and Sheldall. I looked at them all with genuine interest, for from each I knew several in America who had once called them home, yes, and

even after the lapse of many years spoke of them as such. But the place that was interesting above all others was the last gaard in this particular group, and it was also perhaps the least pretentious, this Østbø, this place of so many associations, this spot I had tramped so many hours to reach.

The little house sat on a bare slope bravely facing the roadside which ran in sinuous curves hither and yon in deference to the freaks and contortions of the valley, conforming thus by virtue of the latter being here first. The dwelling was clapboarded but unpainted, yet carried proudly on its roof pretty red tiles that needed no apology, being as nice as any, even in the cities. There was a window or two that looked out upon the road, but the door was on the back side and led into an ante-room where the visitors might make polite and proper preparation before entering the main, inner-room. Entering, finally, this inner home sanctuary, there was revealed to me a large family seated around an uncovered table enjoying scraps of fish and plenty of boiled potatoes served with their jackets on. All seemed to have good appetites, for there were big piles of potato skins ornamenting each plate. At my entrance all arose as if with one accord, and retired modestly into various corners, leaving me sole possessor of the center of the room near the table and the not altogether inviting remnants of the feast. The lady of the house soon recovered herself, attacked the table, bustling energetically about, and, presto! there stood the table in a corner with a white cover and heaped with bread and cheese, and coffee for two. This was an honor meant for me, and the good man of the house offered an apology for presuming to sit by and keep me company.

The man and his wife were from Skaanevik and Winger respectively, having rented the farm and knowing but little regarding those who had preceded them. They knew, however, that thereabouts were left only one or two survivors of the family that had here had its origin and had since grown numerous and strong in a foreign land. It sounded to them like a fairy tale when I told of the three sons, Torkel, Lars and Osmund, and their sister, who had come to America nearly seventy years ago, and whose progeny were in the hundreds, and whose combined possessions would exceed the value of the old homestead ten thousand times. I do not distinctly remember whether I voiced the thought or not, but it occurred to me that it would be a fine idea for all these Østbø descendants in America to buy the old gaard of their forefathers, repair it and keep it intact for generations to come. A tenant could no doubt be easily secured to care for the place. It would be setting a fine example to other descendants of like ability, and, when one thinks of it, our Follinglo in Valdres and the old homestead at Tjernagel would appreciate just such attention.

What a contrast to the spacious comfortable homes among our neighbors in America did not this little eighteen by twenty-four structure present as it stood there bare of ornament and conveniences inside and out, and occupied to its utmost capacity. But even here I found happiness, the common desire of mankind, proving that nowhere, not even in America, may we boast of a monopoly of it. If I mistake not it was on this trip that I found a man who considered himself lucky that he had not become a greedy, money-grabbing American like so many of his childhood companions. He was satisfied with what the Giver of All Things had bestowed right

here, and though he had but little of this world's goods, he hoped he should have enough, and why should he sigh for the conquest of what in itself gave no contentment and often greatly troubled the spirit? "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" I tried to make him understand that the American is not always so greedy for the dollar itself as for the power it stands for, and that we are not a nation of miserly hoarders, but very often generous with our means where there is a worthy cause in need of aid. For instance: though the Norwegians in America are not nearly equal to the population of Norway itself, they have nearly twice as many churches and schools as there are in Norway. This was a surprise to him, but he would have me understand that "love of power and honor is pretty nearly equally yoked with greed, the former being rather worse than the latter. Only when we look away from ourselves and render really unselfish service before God and our fellows, then, and only then, are our efforts apt to be genuinely good." It occurs to me to mention it here that among certain classes of Norwegians, chiefly in the cities, I found not a few who were as eager after crowns as the American is after dollars, though not to gather them and wax strong, but to spend them as soon as earned.

Outside the house I found a dilapidated little structure that in Lars' and Torkel's childhood days had served as a "stabur" (store room), but stood now on extremely rickety legs, feebly remontrating against time, loth to crumble, yet doomed sooner or later to come down. An old barn cellar yawned up at me as I proceeded, telling its story of a hundred years and reminding one of needs and deeds of long forgotten days. Being a prairie-

dweller, nurtured on freshly turned virgin soil and unused to anything but the new, these spectres from the past startled me and even seemed to pursue me as I hastened back to my lodging-place. On the return I took the old Støle road which was even more picturesque than the first. Entesmoen, a drill-ground for the local army corps, lay bare, deserted and uninviting on the left — it was remarkably level for Etne — but further along there were pretty slopes, fine farmyards and lovely, tree-shaded lanes. A church rose out of the gloom, and on nearer approach several dozen green graves, all beautifully kept, were to be seen through the surrounding hedge. The names of those buried there were, no doubt, forgotten, as there were no crosses or stones to preserve them.

Once well past the grave-yard and entered upon a darkened lane, pretty enough in the daytime but rather gloomy at ten or eleven o'clock at night, there rose suddenly before me a veritable spectre, a mountain hobgoblin of the worst type, appearing in the guise of an immense hog, and launching itself without warning from out the gloom right into the middle of the road. If it had not grunted so good-naturedly, as it did, I should surely have been scared; but having been raised, so to speak, among thousands of its kind on the home farm, its well-known voice spoke volumes to reassure me, coming as we did thus familiarly face to face. It was a hog in the flesh, after all, for not only did it grunt, but there was a rope tied about it somewhere that led along till it reached a human hand, connecting with a higher intelligence, which in turn steered its charge from place to place, from "gaard" to "gaard." Now I remembered having heard father tell that Etne was quite famous as

a hog-producing section, and that it not only raised enough for its own needs, but that little pigs were peddled about in surrounding districts. Thus at Tjernagel the Etnesbu hog-peddler was a familiar figure and would be humorously quoted as saying: "Disse grisongadne ä fjorten da'er paa trea veko aa ete net ka di faar, kar." (These pigs are fourteen days going on the third week and eat just exactly anything they get, sir.)

My hostess was just on the point of locking me out when I appeared, tired, but satisfied and hungry, just at the bed-time hour, and suggested a "spread." She smiled a toothless smile, donned her jacket, laid away the baby and cheerfully fetched what she had. As hunger is the best sauce, I had the happiest possible time of it partaking of the simple viands set before me. A dry crust tastes like manna when the appetite has been left alone long enough to grow healthy and ripe.

There were beds enough (there were six) and heavy blankets of hair and of wool in my room; and I believe I could have made out to sleep some in spite of my late supper and my long walk from Ølen to Østbø and Etnesjön, but there were rats between the walls, ceiling and roof, that were out late also this evening, apparently emulating my example, gnawed away on any old thing, even crunching the wood. During the silent midnight watches their incessant comings and goings reminded me of so many cavalry charges, and when they fought, the amount of noise produced was unbelievable and well-nigh unbearable. But as a traveler of some experience, I as usual quickly tried to familiarize myself with my surroundings, listened with philosophic calm, and gradually composed myself to sleep though it is hard to woo Morpheus when there are such bold eavesdroppers about.

The next morning it rained, but as I had learned by now not particularly to mind the usual Norweigian drizzle, I started out confident that my umbrella would

Drawing by E. Biorn.

In the clutches of the elements.

keep off the moisture from above and my galoshes protect me from it below. My way skirted the very brink of the sea, where for many miles the wind had a clean sweep and flung the spray into my very face, adding its salty, clammy moisture to that of the rain, which now and then fell in a respectable shower as if to show that it could thus come down if it but so pleased. It was

actually uncomfortable at times, but who does not feel a certain exhilaration in thus breasting the elements? I missed the thunder and lightning and the splendid-looking array of swiftly advancing clouds as seen during summer rains at home, but the mountains and the roughened sea provided a sort of substitute. Dame Nature assumes a different aspect when no one is supposed to be looking, and it is fun to venture forth on a day like this when neither man nor beast cares to come out, and watch how she slops things about. She chokes the brooks and rivulets with her downpourings till they are completely swollen, making them overflow into the road, the paths, everywhere. She peppers the sea with a thousand tiny missiles till it looked quite dark and forbidding on its face. When it is in this condition, to contemplate it makes one fairly shudder. The wind whips capriciously about as if defying control, the sea showing black and threatening where the frenzied gusts strike its surface. Having finished taunting the sea, they bound unseen into the air, catching wickedly at a corner of my umbrella as they dart past, turning the umbrella inside-out and dashing the rain into my face and down my neck. Though it is quite a tussle to grapple thus with elemental forces, it gives healthy zest to mind and body, quickens the pulse, and rouses the soul.

Towards noon, after the storm was over and the sky had cleared, a little house timidly peeped forth from a corner of the road, it being the first to venture out since morning, none other having shown itself along the way. Here lived two old people, man and wife, alone. Their children were in America, but they scarcely ever wrote home. The good old souls shed tears as they said this; they were so very lonesome, and thought it possibly not

asking too much if they might, once in a great while, hear from their own. No doubt they were doing well, otherwise they would assuredly write, they thought. What a reproach! What did not these well-meant, kindly words imply! What a mountain of selfishness in the absent ones did they not stand for! To the dear souls who had given them life and love and their best thought, these self-loving, forgetful wretches would only write when they were in need! A noble trait, indeed! What if the old folks needed them — needed the uplift of a cheering letter now and then? Of what use is material success if it robs us of love and proper thoughtfulness for others? They asked me to remind their children of their neglect, which I promised I would gladly do, not only with words, but also I came near saying, with lashes.

Having rounded the point of Bjerkenes, whither my road took me, there appeared in the dim distance, with a wide fjord between, Fjellberg, the birthplace of my grandmother and my present destination. But to reach it was another question, for though the storm had abated, the sea still remained quite stirred up and angry, and it might not be wise to trust it to carry smaller craft in safety. Enquiring at several houses,I found none anxious to accommodate me with boat-service. Luckily the sun came out and lulled the wind to sleep, coaxing also the boisterous waves into comparative calm. By this time I had reached Torbjørn Nervig's place. He was a well to do farmer with twenty-five acres of good tillable land to his name, a very sizable farm for western Norway; in fact, the largest I happened to come across in this part of the country, many possessing but an acre or two.

Torbjørn was working in the grainfield, but hearing of my strong desire to reach Fjellberg that afternoon, stopped short in the midst of his work to consider ways and means of getting me transported across. He did not seem to be able to hit upon a better plan than that he himself should do it, provided, however, that his son would bear him company and help with the rowing. The boy would rather be excused, and reminded his father of their trip recently taken in just such a sea as this, when they had capsized with this very boat and dropped the pig they were carrying into the bottom of the sea, while they themselves had been thoroughly soused in the brine for their pains. Torbjørn smiled and said their passenger this time was no pig and would no doubt wisely sit still, which their former charge had not done. The boy was an obedient son and offered no further protest; the grainfield was accordingly forsaken, and off we went to the boat-house to prepare for the trip. We threw in plenty of oilskins, an extra baling bucket, calked the leaks, and so pushed off. The breeze again slightly stirring and being favorable, the boy spread an old rag for a sail, which increased our speed considerably, without requiring a particle of additional energy as far as we were concerned.

Torbjørn was talkative and told me about various things, of which the new mode of penning up schools of mackerel in the open sea interested me most. Except in the lower depths the fish are nowhere safe from this cunning contrivance which closes so unexpectedly from below upon its unsuspecting victims. As they fly in sheer terror up and away to make their escape, it is only to strike against the encircling net in whatever direction they so frantically seek egress. They are com-

pletely surrounded except where the water meets the air, but to jump into this forbidding element though it be but for the distance of an inch, to gain their freedom, never occurs to the poor captives. A large motorboat properly supplied with nets and other paraphernalia hung like a hawk over the deep ready to cast its talons wherever surface indications promised a possible haul.

We were rocked comfortably along by wind and wave, when, suddenly, there came a disturbance. The wind was roused into furious activity, which made the water momentarily roughen and take on a dark, threatening hue as if it would fain strike back, which indeed it did after it had got its bearings in the new direction it was now forced to travel. We were caught in the midst of the turmoil, and of the two combatants the waves bothered us the most, for, their current being thus suddenly turned, they hopped vengefully up into the very face of their assailant like angry pups. Luckily we were approaching a protecting ledge of land, but not before we had shipped considerable water and I had contemplated as in a nightmare a certain pet hog that had gone overboard somewhere near here. I got a good part of my clothing soused in the brine, but otherwise we were in excellent condition as we drew up, safe and sound, after our three-hour trip, at the Fjellberg landing-place.

Though desirous of making an immediate visit at the nearby parsonage, to seek information as to the whereabouts of possible relatives, I could not seem to be in too much of a hurry to leave the kind people who had labored to bring me across. I wanted to consider the subject of pay, but it took a long time before Torbjørn would give me a chance to broach it. He skillfully

steered the conversation into other channels for nearly half an hour before he allowed me to lead up to it. He finally admited that he would be willing to receive seventy-five cents for the job, which sum he thought was a great plenty. It was exceedingly small wages for so much service and such considerable sacrifice in leaving their work. They seemed most interested in being able to help the stranger through, forgetting to be concerned for themselves.

At the parsonage I found the young minister's wife and her little son at home, and from them soon learned that among their nearest neighbors were people likely to turn out to be such as I sought. That I might obtain fuller knowledge she gave me access to the church records, and here I soon discovered an array of names that bore evidence of our having a numerous kinship in this corner of the world. The register showed the names of two brothers and two sisters, brothers and sisters of my departed grandmother, and of whom she had no doubt often told, but about whom all had forgotten long since. How one is filled with awe and reverence when turning the leaves of such musty documents, perusing the records of the births, christenings, confirmations, marriages and deaths of those who lived their lives when the world was younger, and who lived so that we, their descendants, were privileged to be born, wrought in their likeness, formed and developed into individual selves, and, most wonderful of all, created with immortal souls!

The minister's wife suspecting that old Torsten at Havn must be my great-uncle offered to accompany me thither to introduce me. The way was not long but very crooked, leading us a merry dance to note and fol-

low its caprices as it bore hither and yon, twixt bush and brier, amid rocks and rills, over bumps and hills, till we finally arrived breathless and spent at the threshold of Ole Fjellberg's house in Havn. Ole was not at home, but his wife and daughter were, and to these my kind companion introduced me, asking in the same breath how father fared today. We were told that he remained in bed continually, yet not so much from actual sickness as from the weakening weight of years, furthered also by increasing deafness and failing eyesight.

Like a great many other old people I have met, the old gentleman was vastly curious to know why I had come and all about me, which I felt was most uninteresting compared with the story I expected to hear from him. When I finally made mention of grandmother and of her childhood's home here at Fjellberg, there ensued a silence, for I could do nothing but hold my breath, while he peered anxiously and questioningly at me through time-dimmed eyes. I had to shout loud and long her name, over and over again, for he wanted to be fully convinced that what I had said really corresponded with the unbelievable thing caught by his ears. He looked dubious in spite of all my loudly repeated declarations; for, said he, "I never heard my youngest sister at Stavanger tell of having a grandson in America." It was now my turn to be surprised, and I queried: "Have you then a younger sister by the same name? Grandmother would now have been over ninety had she lived." The scales suddenly fell from his eyes, and he now realized that he saw before him a descendant of his oldest sister who, as he explained, was two years older than he, had left the parental home at an early

age to hire out, and had drifted from place to place till lost track of at home, finally passing out of their minds altogether.

As with Kari and Marit and other old people I met, I learned that letter-writing was rarely indulged in among the country people sixty and seventy years ago, messages and greetings being sent by word of mouth, through the chance comings and goings of relatives or friends. Fjellberg seemed a world removed from Avaldsnes in the day of sailboats and overland journeys; hence communication lagged and finally came to a standstill. Such, at least, was the case with grandmother and the home folks.

Old Torsten had not heard of this sister for sixty years. So eager was his desire to learn all that his old pale cheeks took on spots of red, proclaiming the inner tumult of aroused remembrance and thought. He told of their childhood, but further than this he could not go, and entreated me to tell more, which I did in a voice of thunder, but the relation of which does not properly come within the scope of this narrative.

A bevy of far-removed cousins sat sewing in an adjoining room, and to them came the reverberations of my voice, while that of the old man, as with all deaf people, came forth scarcely audible even to me. My Norwegian-American dialect, togther with the powerful stress laid on each word, and the one-sided, telephone fashion of the conversation as caught by the listeners, produced an uncommon effect, which, no doubt, was responsible for the salvos of smothered giggles that, ever and anon, betrayed the situation among my highly esteemed cousins in the sewing-room. I soon came to wish most heartily that the ordeal might soon be over, but old Torsten knew

nothing about this and kept me shouting as long as I had any voice left. I finally succeeded in tearing myself away, but could scarcely bring my voice back to normal again, and so awoke anew the mirth of those fond cousins whom I had, even now, set out soberly to entertain.

I left the old man with a pleased look on his face which was a reward well worth coming a long way to earn, and to store permanently away. He was bed-ridden and, in consequence of his failing senses, nearly shut off from the world; and so I count it as one of the few great privileges that have come to me that I had the pleasure of bringing some cheer into the inner sanctuary of his well-nigh isolated soul. He confided to me that this world never gives contentment to the very old, nor to the young, for he had tried it, both in youth and age, and though he lived mostly in retrospection and found considerable interest in thus living life over again, his eyes shone with unquenchable homesickness as he spoke of the Haven of Peace whither, with God's promise as a compass, he had set sail, and toward which he now felt himself happily drifting.

Ole, the son, came home from his carpenter work in the dusk, in time for the evening meal. When I introduced myself as a son of his American cousin, he told me very frankly that he was not in the least aware of having either cousins or sons of cousins in America, Canada, or anywhere else but Norway. I convinced him, however, that I was speaking the truth, for with the living identical specimen before him, who could fully prove his assertions, it would have been vain to argue. His welcome became most hearty, and the house with all it contained seemed to exist solely for my convenience and pleasure.

Ole told me that I had dropped right into a nest of relatives in this region, and that I could scarcely move in any direction without encountering some of them. Grandmother's two brothers and two sisters had all married, and all had had children; and now the children's children were numbered in the hundreds. Most of them remained in the vicinity, though a few had moved to the cities, such as the Axdals in Stavanger and the Eliasons, Fjellbergs and Axdals in Bergen.

To come thus suddenly upon relatives in the northeast corner of the world, without being sufficiently prepared for it, was quite startling and tended to rob me of sleep and my usual serenity of mind. The discovery was of such moment that I have deemed it not improper to make record of it here as an example showing how easy it was for people to lose track of one another before the era of easy communication as enjoyed at the present day. If letter-writing was little practised at home, one might not expect much written communication from foreign countries — America, for instance, whither so many had gone and whence the postage on a letter often amounted to as much as a dollar. Dollars were scarce in those days, nor were pens, ink, and paper any too plenty; and to crown it all came the disinclination to coax the stiff, hard-worked fingers into grasping the pen; in short, the undertaking was so great that many never wrote at all.

What a mass of interesting history and other information would not, after all, the few early letters that were sent home, contain! Those written during the great Civil War, in which the Norwegians took an active and honorable part, would, no doubt, make intensely interesting reading, could any be found. It would, perhaps, be

considered somewhat one-sided reading, however, for I have never heard of any Confederate Norwegians, all Norsmen, as far as I know, having fought for the Union.

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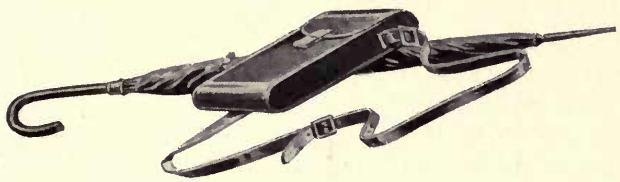
With the exception of walking trips in and about Bergen, Christiania and Voss, in all of which places I remained for lengthy visits, this ends the record of my pedestrian feats in the Northland.

I made, besides, two delightful trips by rail, to Kongsvinger near the Swedish frontier, and to Sandefjord in the southeast part of Norway, to visit friends, scouring the surrounding country on foot at the same time. I visited also the agricultural college at Aas. From these trips I obtained a fairly accurate idea of the activities in this by far the best agricultural part of Norway; but adequately to describe this section, as well as the cities named would require a separate chapter.



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